



PHD

Taiwanese never-married single mothers

the decision, consequences and strategies of managing single motherhood in a Confucian context

Lai, Hung-Ju

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**Taiwanese Never-married Single Mothers: the Decision,
Consequences and Strategies of Managing Single Motherhood
in a Confucian Context**

Submitted by

Hung-ju Lai

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

University of Bath

Department of Social and Policy Sciences

August 2017

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List of Abbreviations

AFH	The Act of Assistance for Family in Hardship
BLI	Bureau of Labour Insurance
CEPD	Council of Economic Planning and Development
CWB	Child Welfare Bureau
CWLF	Child Welfare League Foundation
DGBAS	Directorate-general of Budget, Accounting and Statistics
DHR	Department of Household Registration
EU	European Union
GEEL	Gender Equality in Employment Law
GHA	The Genetic Health Act
GHF	The Garden of Hope Foundation
MHW	Ministry of Health and Welfare
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoI	Ministry of the Interior
NMSMs	Never married single mothers
NTD	New Taiwanese Dollar
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONS	The Office for National Statistics
PAA	Public Assistance Act
SOC	Sense of coherence
TCG	Taichung City Government
TPAS	Teenage Pregnancy Assistance Station
USCB	U.S. Census Bureau
WWSCs	Women's Welfare Service Centres

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Abstract

Being only 6% of all single mothers, never-married single mothers in Taiwan are a group of mothers which have been neglected for long time. Public perception of these mothers has been harsh and they are associated with infanticide, abortion or welfare dependency. Although often needing welfare, while in the welfare system, adult mothers are often excluded from certain child-related benefits and categorised together with teenage mothers despite their diverse needs. Inevitably, they need to deal with the process of stigmatisation and poverty within the East Asian context, given that marriage is still the predominant form of marital status and the male breadwinner model is prevalent in this region. This research, therefore, aims to explore the underlying reasons for their decision to be mothers in such circumstances; the financial and interpersonal consequences facing never-married single mothers; and the strategies they develop to deal with their lives within the Taiwanese context.

This research conducted in-depth interviews with 30 adult never-married single mothers in Taiwan, and used the Ecomapping (or Sociogram) technique to elicit rich data and to visualise change in their social networks. The findings highlight that their decisions to become mothers mirrored the gendered expectation from Confucianism when it emphasises the importance of motherhood. This has offered them a ‘space’ to justify themselves as a never-married single mother. However, the challenges facing them following their unwed pregnancy were significant and led to them being financially disadvantaged and socially stigmatised. This study reveals their strategies of economic survival and explores how they manage their stigmatised lives according to the level of resources they could access and deploy and the quality and strength of their social and familial relationships.

According to the findings, it is argued in this research that as a women/mother in the Taiwanese context, it is financially and socially risky for them to choose another pathway (i.e. becoming a mother without getting married) to fulfil the goal of their lives. Unless this society becomes more permissive and the state facilitates a secure employment environment for women as a whole, only trivial agentic actions applied by these individual mothers aimed at confronting the existing social norms will be observed and they could hardly transform the context.

Chapter 1 Introduction

You like to ask me why I gave birth to you. I used to say, 'it is because you're fantastic!', but you replied to me, 'you hadn't known me yet so how did you know?' This is a very difficult question, but what I want to tell you is, you're the most meaningful and beautiful thing happening in my life. Thanks to you, I am more than willing to fight for a better world, and more than happy to be a better person. Only through doing this for myself first, so that I can do everything for you.

(Ren-fon, writing for her daughter's nursery graduation on her Blog)

For the last three decades, the family structure in Taiwan has been changing significantly and in particular, the rising proportion of single-parent families is salient (Directorate-general of Budget, Accounting and Statistics [DGBAS], 2014). According to Cheng et al. (2008), the percentage of single-parent families rose from 5.1% to 12.9% between 1988 and 2007. Unlike some Western countries, the ratio of single mothers to single fathers has been higher (5.5: 4.5 in 2007) for cultural background reasons and the legal status of the children in relation to their guardianship (see Chapter 2 for more detail). The rising number of single-mother families in Taiwan, in particular, has been considered as an important issue and many researchers have been putting effort into investigating its impact since the 1980s. Research concerning single motherhood has covered quantitative aspects, such as statistical assessment surveys and qualitative ones such as lived experience, with the aim being to understand this phenomenon as part of social change and hence, how the state should react to it.

From the perspective of the British scholars Duncan and Edwards (1999), the discourses surrounding single motherhood can be divided into four forms: as a social threat, which is concerned with moral values and financial deprivation; as a social problem, pertaining to the structural constraints on them when they are striving to afford a one-parent family; as a change of life style, when single motherhood is taken as normal and hence, an acceptable part of social change; and lastly, as running away from the patriarchal society, where the mothers have the desire to be liberated from the male world. Considering the Taiwanese case, single mothers are normally perceived as a type of family produced owing to social changes, such as the increase in women's participation rate in the labour market and the

divorce rate over the last three decades. However, as mentioned above, the proportion of single-parent family among all families with children under 18 years old is only around 10%¹. It is, thus, much less that likely a change in family formation will be seen to resonate with what Western scholars, such as, Giddens (1992) and Beck-Gernsheim and Beck (1995) have claimed, whereby the relationships in the modern society have become fluid and changeable. Single-parent families are more likely to be considered as a social problem by Taiwanese researchers. Consequently, the studies on Taiwan have mainly focused on issues such as poverty (Cheng, 1999; Hsueh, 2001, 2002; Liu, 2000; Tong, 1992; Wang, 2005; Wu, 2004b), employment and economic security (Chen, 2014; Chen, 2002; Wu, 2004b; Yang, 2009), parenthood and childrearing deficiency (Chen & Cheng, 2003; Cheng, 2001; Pong, 2006) or social relations and their resilience (Pong, 2005; Pong & Wang, 2002). Moreover, critiques on policies have focused solely on mean-tested benefits and the small amounts of financial subsidies, rather than a comprehensive structural change in the labour market and childcare supporting system.

Among all these areas being researched, what is of much interest for this researcher is the absence of study and hence, lack of in depth knowledge regarding never-married single mothers, which is probably because they represent a very small percentage when compared to Western countries, such as the UK². As a social worker providing services for single mothers according to the Act of Assistance for Families in Hardship (referred to as the AFH)³, I noticed that the numbers of applicants who are never-married has been increasing from the observation during my practice (see Chapter 2 for more detail). It therefore intrigued me to ask: who are they and why did they give birth to the child without having a husband? Is their aspiration just like the quote presented at the beginning? Are women having this status going to become an increasingly important issue in the Taiwanese context? These questions have fostered my interest regarding the circumstances this group of mothers have found themselves in.

¹ See Figure 2.1 for comparison with other countries.

² According to the Office for National Statistics [ONS] in the UK, in 2011, 52% of female lone parents with dependent children had never been married (ONS, 2013).

³ In Article 6, it is regulated that local government should arrange services, such as home visits, to assess the benefits recipient's living circumstances. If it has improved, the benefits should be halted. This service is currently carried out by the social workers in local women's services centres. See Chapter 2 for more information regarding AFH.

1.1 The group being stigmatised: never-married single mothers in Taiwan

To understand never-married single mothers in the Taiwanese context, I would like to clarify firstly, why they are categorised as ‘never-married’ ‘single’ mothers in this research. In the UK context, they are more often called single lone mothers or never-married lone mothers (Kieman et al., 1998; Rowlinson & McKay, 1998), when they are mothers who have separated from their cohabiting partners after getting pregnant, or those who have had a baby without cohabitation. Some of them, who have split from their partners are also called separated mothers as they are like married mothers who have separated from their husbands (Rowlingson & McKay, 2002). However, in the Taiwanese context, there is no such thing as civil partnership or formal statistics for cohabiting couples and thus, it is more appropriate to consider classifying them as ‘single’ mothers as they have never had the status of having been married. More specifically, ‘never-married single mothers’ refers a group of mothers who are ‘single’ from the moment when they give birth to their eldest child and decide to raise the child up on her own. They could have had other relationships or have been cohabiting with their new partner(s) before the time of being interviewed, for as long as they have never been married, they come under this definition. Moreover, the term ‘never-married’ does not mean that they are not going to be married in the future, but it emphasises that they are different from mothers who have divorced, who can be called ‘unwed’ or ‘unmarried’ mothers, but they have been previously in wedlock.

These mothers are also often mixed up with teenage lone mothers under 18, who are the focus of the media and social policy and receive criticism in relation to their ignorance about sex, failure to take contraception and promiscuity (Thane & Evans, 2012; Yardley, 2008). In this research the mothers over 18 years old are the focus, as they are the ones who have not yet been paid much attention, both in the research and policy arena. Shih (2010a) reported that adult never-married single mothers in Taiwan are often neglected with most of the available allowances, consultation and housing resources being awarded to teenage mothers. That is, because they are adults, whilst they face the same serious condemnation from society for transgressing certain social norms, they, unlike their teenage counterparts, receive virtually no support from the state or the public at large. This is because they are pregnant when they are not married and they have decided to give birth to a child without addressing this, which many people are opposed to. According to Lee

(2001), in the Taiwanese context most often arises through extramarital affair with a married man, which results in this group of mothers being stereotyped by society as having experienced these circumstances. This stereotyping leads to many of them wishing to become invisible to society so as to avoid its judgement. Consequently, their voice has invariably been neglected and their images are often very negative. The impact on their social lives is thus enormous, because of them being never-married mothers. From another perspective, they would transgress another norm, if they decided to have an abortion, whereby the life of their baby was given up and not only might they have personal regret regarding this decision for the rest of their life, but also, once again, they would have to cope with society's opprobrium. That is, in the Taiwanese context, there is widespread condemnation of abortion, which is driven by the media, in particular (Chen, 2004; Ho, 2008; Kuo, 2009).

Figure 1.1 shows the process through which these mothers become never married single mothers. Apart from choosing between maintaining the relationship through cohabiting or marriage or broke up, having abortion in many cases appeared on the option list⁴, but for one reason or another, these mothers choose to keep the baby. Rowlingson and McKay (1998) highlighted how once this decision is made, then there is a much reduced possibility of a mother changing her mind and proceeding with an abortion. However, it is unclear why this is the case and it is thus, anticipated that investigation into the incentives and/or moralities underpinning the decision not to have an abortion will shed light on why the mothers of interest opted to have a child without getting married. It is believed that similar investigation will also shed light on why they were unwilling to have their babies adopted.

⁴ See Chapters 2 and 3 for a detailed discussion as to why Taiwanese women might take abortion as an option, but are also afraid of it.

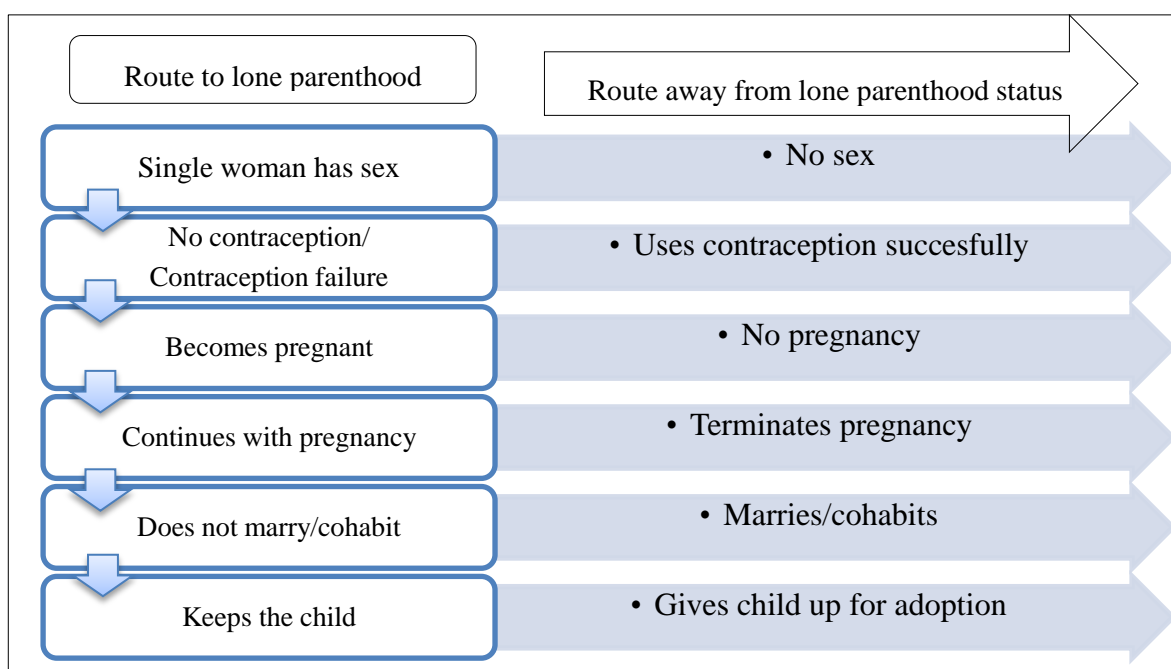


Figure 1.1 Routes into single motherhood

Source: Rowlingson and McKay (1998)

In the social policy and social work area, a few studies have investigated this group of mothers in relation to certain basic issues. According to Pong and Wang (2002), these mothers are more likely to be looked down upon because their reason to become mothers and hence, the general consensus is that they should have lower priority than widowed or divorced mothers when applying for resources from the state. Cheng et al. (2008) also pointed out that these mothers are more likely to be trapped in a vicious circle of unemployment and childcare in the early days of their motherhood; less likely to ask for help or the right to marriage with the child's father; and are often excluded from both informal and formal resources owing to being punished by 'doing the wrong thing'. Other researchers, on the other hand, have focused on how they made their decision to become a mother (Cheng, 2010); how their motherhood looks like in reality (Lin, 2010); and how they might manage their lives through a 'strength perspective' rather than being perceived as a social problem (Chen, 2003). However, there has been no study discussing the fundamental issue of the moral challenges they encounter in their daily lives and the basic reason for their disadvantaged situation, that of being a woman. In general, the purpose of the current research is to address the lack of knowledge regarding the circumstances of never married single mothers, in particular, by investigating whether or not, they represent a sign of social change in the Taiwanese context.

1.2 Taiwan as an East-Asian Welfare Regime: what has not changed and what yet might change for women

As aforementioned, never-married single mothers are widely considered as a group of mothers who transgress certain social norms and are condemned for this. Speaking of transgression, it is crucial to ask: why being a never-married single mother is transgressing social norms? Moreover, what norms, and what kind of cultural background are they transgressing? The aim of this section is to explain the context these mothers are located in and how this might exert its influence among them.

Confucianism, established by Confucius (551-479 BC), is a philosophical ideology that has ruled moral and ethical thought in China for more than two thousand years. It prevails in East Asian countries with the influence of Chinese culture being felt not only in China, but also in Vietnam, Singapore, Japan, Korea and Taiwan. Nowadays, the populations of these countries still adopt Confucianism in nearly every aspect of their daily lives. According to White and Goodman (1998), it is demonstrated in the emphasis put on higher education, strong family relations, benevolent paternalism, social harmony and discipline, as well as respect for tradition and a strong work ethic, all of which establish the value system prevailing in almost all matters in relation to daily life. To understand more about the application of Confucianism in modern society, the model of Gao et al. (2012) is adopted as it can help to conceptualise Confucian values. These scholars firstly divided its main ideas into three categories pertaining to: family, self-cultivation, and gendered roles. Furthermore, in order to understand its impact on sexuality among adolescents, these researchers also added an extra element under values, that of sexuality. Taking this into account can help in the understanding of the attitudes of the state towards never-married single mothers from the structural level.

1.2.1 Family and gender relationships in the Confucian context

The family has always been at the centre in Confucian society. It is generally understood that it is the basic unit for performing economic and productive, as well as educational and socialising functions, which are achieved by the enforcement of precise ethical and moral principles (Lee, 1989). Collective value is another key dimension in the ideology of Confucianism. Yan and Sorenson (2004) highlighted the importance of collective interests, stressing the necessity for harmony and stability for maintaining family, the community

and society. Accordingly, when confronted with a collective unit such as the family, personal sacrifice is indispensable. That is, the individual should be subordinated to the family, owing to him/her being a member of it, in order to avoid contention and to sustain harmony. Combined with the hierarchical social structure of the three relationships between parents and children, husbands and wives, and older and younger siblings, collective value should be treasured within the family unit so as to reach the final goal of harmony.

Croll (1981) pointed out that the importance of marriage was highlighted in ancient Confucian literature. In the *Book of Rites*, the first purpose of marriage extended to producing the male heir for the husband's family. Secondly, the marriage invariably allied two families and strengthened each other's power in the local area. Therefore, according to Kung et al. (2004), a marriage in ancient China could be very utility-oriented, and its stability as well as its maintenance was highly stressed in order to uphold harmony. Combined with the principle that women have to submit to their husbands in decision-making, the harmony in marriage was based on maintaining the extant strict gender hierarchy. For example, only men could bring up the issues of the 'seven ous⁵' listed by *Book of Rites* in order to obtain a divorce (Yu, 2005).

Women's chastity before marriage is another example of gendered requirements placed on them. This is shown in the immorality of divorce and during the Song dynasty (960-1368 AD) this was stressed by the Confucian successors, such as the *Rationality School*, according to Kung et al. (2004), becoming institutionalised during the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911 AD). As a result, remarriage has also been taken as an immoral event for women. Thus, divorce rarely happened and life-long widowhood was deeply honoured often being marked by the erection of a memorial to praise the widow's virtue (Uhn, 1999). Moreover, as Confucianism developed with time, sexuality gradually became a taboo in ancient Chinese culture, only to be connected with formal marriage and the function of child birth. Therefore, premarital sex or sex outside of marriage was considered a forbidden taboo act. However, in practice, it was only shameful for women to engage in such behaviour, for men were free to commit adultery or visit prostitutes without

⁵ That is, they could effectively oust their wives' just by claiming that they were one of the following: lacking filial piety in serving the parents-in-law, childless, had committed adultery, exhibited jealousy, suffered sickness, had committed theft or were a gossip.

condemnation. Furthermore, as mentioned above, only men had the right to claim a divorce. In sum, in this situation the only person to be condemned was the woman who failed to protect her virginity.

Based on the ideology of the family and marriage outlined above, Confucianism is therefore revealed as making a strong distinction between gender roles. First of all, under this, sons are the ones who are acknowledged to continue as the heirs. Herr (2012) argued that this tradition of the patrilineal descent group being the fundamental unit of society, stemmed only from around 960 to 1279 AD, under the neo-Confucianism of Zhu Xi. Therefore, women or daughters are supposed to focus on reproduction so as to bring forward male offspring after their arranged marriage. As a result, high fertility, short birth intervals, and an imbalanced sex ratio are generally found in traditional Confucian societies (Xie, 1994). Furthermore, women are assigned subordinate roles as wives, daughters and mothers and have to show obedience to their husbands, fathers and sons (Chan, 2008b; Shin & Shaw, 2003). Shaw (2008) stressed the Mencius⁶ idea of separating inner and outer spheres among men and women, noting that the former should be in charge of public affairs, whilst the latter are tasked with managing domestic functions. According to this doctrine, the value of domestic work is often considered lower than the work of men (Xie, 1994). According to Herr (2012), this point has been extensively criticised by feminists. Moreover, the Confucian gendered chastity also became a compulsory obligation that women needed to follow. Consequently, women who violated the principles of keeping their chastity either before getting married (i.e. having pre-marital sex) or after (i.e. having an affair with a married man, or unfaithful to their husbands) would be thought as reckless and face condemnation. It can be seen that, the hierarchical relationships, the prescribed gender role within the family and the control of women's sexuality represent major obstacles to achieving gender equality in the Confucian cultural context. For never-married single mothers in Taiwan, this culture context indeed form a backdrop in which they have to live their lives with poor reputation and negative responses from their social network. As a result, according to Cheng (1999), this obviously would bring negative impacts on these mothers social relationships and the resources generated from them.

⁶ Written by Mencius (372-289 BC) and his disciples.

1.2.2 East Asian welfare regimes, women and single mothers

From the above, we can see how in East Asian societies gender relationships are shaped by Confucianism, emphasises disciplined relationships within the family. To the followers of Confucian beliefs, the family is the most important agent in society rather than the individual. That is, states which have adopted the principles of Confucianism are, as a result, highly dependent on the function of family, which has been reflected on the formation of East Asian Welfare regimes (Walker & Wong, 2005). As pointed out by Holliday (2000), East Asian countries, such as Japan, Hong-Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan, are subject to ‘productivist welfare capitalism’, which leads to the state focusing on economic growth and investment in education at the expense of the development of social rights. According to Sung and Pascall (2014), despite that the rapid social-economic change and some space in which social movement and academic enquiry have flourished, the characteristics of gender regimes in the Confucian context would appear to have remained mainly as having: greater responsibility on the family rather than the state; strong expectation of women fulfilling familial obligations; and a hierarchical structure based on age and gender, in particular, such that ‘women are subject to the will of parents-in-law’. In turn, the Confucianism underpinning these welfare regimes can be the source of the ideological basis for criticism of what may be termed the abnormal family unit and women’s fertility behaviours that do not fit with the expected norm.

In the case of Taiwan, the former Premier of the Executive Yuan, Hao Bo Tsun (1992) strongly asserted that ‘social welfare in Taiwan has to be established on the diligence of citizens and filial piety within the family. The provision of social welfare should not interfere with these traditional virtues’ (Sheu, 2000). He further stressed that ‘the best social welfare model (in Taiwan) is the three-generation family’ (Lin, 1995). That is to say, the duty of care should lie within families instead of the state, but, inevitably, this is mostly the responsibility of female members. Even now, 55% of the carers of children under three years of age are still the mothers themselves (DGBAS, 2013b) and in the main, carers of disabled elderly people are still the women in the family, especially daughters-in-law (Chang, 2008a). This reliance on women to cope has deeply influenced policies regarding the family, allowing them to be ignored for many years, in that only in 2004 were the first guidelines launched regarding family policy, which advocated for the state’s duty of care and gender equality (Lin, 2012).

As some new issues emerged, such as the population showing a below replacement birth rate and growing diversity in the forms of family formation, East Asian welfare states encountered the challenge of whether to maintain their prevailing Confucian-oriented ideology or to encourage change. Taking Singapore as an example, this country with high levels of government intervention, still holds to their stance on family values and women's obligations regarding childbirth (Graham et al., 2002). In 1993, the Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong announced clearly that 'our strong family structures and values hold our society together', and the acceptance of unmarried motherhood is 'wrong' to the 'respectable part of society'. He warned that 'by removing the stigma, we may encourage more women to have children without getting married' (Wong et al., 2004, p.45). Furthermore, Wong et al. (ibid) highlighted the prime minister's opinions on single-parent families, with him commenting that they are economically disadvantaged when bearing children when compared with dual-earner ones. Therefore, when drawing on the discourses of economic rationality and anti-welfarism, the single-parent family seems to go against the other key value at the heart of Confucianism, that of the collective interest and thereby, this form of the family could 'erode the country's economic competitiveness'.

Compared with Singapore, the Taiwanese government has not shown its negative attitude directly towards single parents. In fact, since the 1980s, waves of social movements have helped to draw public attention to women's rights regarding physical security and divorce and family laws have been amended to protect their rights (see Chapter 2 for more detail). With the amendments of the Family Part of the Civil Code from the 1980s and the issuing of the Gender Equality in Employment Law (GEEL) in 2002, matters regarding family and marriage from the perspective of gender equality were to found in discussion forums. However, according to the current single-parent policies in Taiwan, it appears that the welfare that is provided is still of a residual form (Kuo et al., 2009; Lee, 2001). That is, the state still hesitates to offer its complete support to these 'incomplete' families. As mentioned in the context of Singapore, similar welfare dilemmas that the single-parent family is encountering there also exist in Taiwan, particularly within social policy making circles, because of the widely shared point of view that 'being a single parent is a personal failure, so it should not be taken care of by public resources' (Sheu, 2000 , p. 267).

Turning to welfare and never-married mothers, more ambivalence and conflicts in provision emerge. Sometimes this provision has been limited and only made available for

teenage girls, mainly due to the fact that child welfare is more maturely institutionalised than that of women in the Taiwanese context (Chang, 2000). The paradox regarding issues around never-married mothers in this society have recently been demonstrated in two instances according to Shih (2011). In 2011, due to the below replacement rate regarding the population, procreation allowances were granted to promote childbirth. However, it emerged that half of local governments provided them only to married mothers and excluded unwed ones, which was criticised for putting a heavy moral ‘chain’ on unmarried mothers. On the other hand, so as to promote childbirth, one minister in the Ministry of the Interior [MoI] proposed a slogan that stated that people should not only ‘encourage marriages among young people, but also needed to accept unwed childbirth’ (Nextmedia, 2010). This raised public debates, with some arguing that this approach should not be used for promoting childbirth and neither should it be accepted in the morality of marriage. Consequently, from these happenings that occurred during the promotion of this policy, an essential matter, that of morality, arose and thus must feature in the discussions concerning never-married single mothers that are central to this current study. This moral matter extends not only to the debate of what is a good family in the Confucian sense, but also relates to the state’s imagination of what one is, when looking out for its own benefit i.e. the national interest. Welfare provision, on the other hand, can also be an essential source of support for these mothers, when they are in financial distress. That is to say, the question of whether this form of family can be morally accepted in the field of welfare provision, which has to take the public good into consideration, is also closely related to the circumstances that the never-married single mothers may face in their daily lives.

1.3 Research questions and the objectives of the research

Given the circumstances of never-married single mothers in the context of a Confucian society, as described above, and the absence of in depth research in relation to how they cope in such a society, the main aim of this study is to examine how never-married single mothers experienced themselves in such a society. That is, this lies in shedding light on how these mothers negotiate their futures in a society where marriage is the mainstream value and state policy provides them, at best, unenthusiastic support. The research involves addressing the following two questions:

- What experiences are faced by never-married single mothers in a society where marriage is still the dominant form of relationship?
- What state provision and other resources are never-married single mothers able to draw upon for support?

In order to tackle these research questions, three objectives are proposed:

- To explore how and why they become never-married single mothers in this context;
- To understand the economic and socio-relational effects of being a never married single mother;
- To explore how never-married single mothers manage their everyday lives, including their experiences of employment, housing and childcare, as well as their strategies for coping with their identities as being never-married single mothers.

This research starts out from a gender perspective, drawing on the theories of individualisation (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), stigma (Goffman, 1963) and gendered moral rationalities (Duncan & Edwards, 1999), as the former address women's choices in the context of social change; the second highlights the sorts of difficulties these women face when the traditional part of society still exerts its power; and the third evokes discussion on the moral choices pertaining to when these mothers need to choose what will be the best for their and their children's lives. Moreover, the qualitative approach – in-depth interviewing, is adopted to collect the rich data generated directly from the mothers themselves. Through gathering and analysing these, this study will empirically contribute to the existing literature of single mothers in the East Asian context, helping to add to the field of knowledge with regards to their lives and experiences. The study will seek to reveal why they choose to become never-married single mothers and how these mothers might be different from, as well as being similar to, the other type of single mothers in this context – for example divorced single mothers. Given the evident lack of current policy in support of these mothers and the residual nature of what is on offer in relation to services to them, this study will provide insights into the role and importance of welfare policy in these mothers' lives and recommendations for more effective policy design in the future. Finally, it is anticipated that their narratives will assist also the development of theory from a gendered perspective, with a specific contribution towards

an understanding of how current structures in the Taiwanese context constrain the focal women, financially and socially, and in terms of their choices, thereby leaving them at a severe disadvantage.

1.4 Chapter outlines

The chapters for this research are structured as followed so as to address the research questions.

Contextual information, statistics and secondary data are drawn upon to provide a general picture of current Taiwanese single mothers' situation within society in Chapters 2. Specifically, Chapter 2 looks at the statistics and policies in relation to single parents as well as making comparisons between fathers and mothers, with regards to their financial and social circumstances. In addition, there is consideration of the welfare policies aimed at supporting disadvantaged single parents in the Taiwanese context. The ones which are considered as the result of, and also the incentive for never-married single motherhood, for example, the Genetic Health Act, are also in discussion.

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework of this research based on a gendered perspective, which employed to examine the decisions, the challenges and the coping strategies engaged in by the mothers of this research. This chapter first discuss the signs of individualisation happening in this relatively traditional and patriarchal society, thus highlighting the possibility that some of these mothers' current decisions and future situation could be viewed from a different perspective. Secondly, as a group of mothers who still make the deviant decision to be a mother without marriage in a society where the institution is still a dominant form of relationship, the concept of 'gender moral rationalities' (Duncan & Edwards, 1999) stands out and helps in examining the ambivalent space between what can be achieved and what cannot, as yet, but maybe can become reality in the future. Finally, the chapter ends with considering women's situation in the Confucian society where they are generally taken as being subordinate to men, and the financial and socio-relational consequences and coping strategies of being a deviant in this society.

Chapter 4 provides the methodological processes engaged in for this research. Concerning the research focus, the participants were all women and a feminist approach is highlighted

as the central principle guiding the methods adopted. The technique of ecomapping is introduced as part of the in-depth interviewing that was employed so as to enhance the richness of data. The data analysis was conducted using software with themes and frameworks in order to capture the storylines of these mothers with regards to their various features, decision-making processes and current situations. The reflections and ethical issues in relation to the research process are covered at the end of this chapter.

Three empirical chapters discuss the collected and analysed data. Chapter 5, in order to achieve the first research objective, explores these mothers' past relational history and their decision-making processes underpinning their becoming mothers. Chapter 6, to meet the second research objective, probes the financial and socio-relational consequences of being a mother without getting married in the first place. In these two chapters, the notion of 'gendered moral rationalities' is found to be a central principle, while they were making their decisions. It can also be seen the power of tradition has a pull on most of women investigated, but for a few signs of individualisation can be seen to be at work. Whatever the case, the lives of these women are greatly affected by gender. In Chapter 7, several case studies are provided along with in depth analysis so as to accomplish the third research objective, that of demonstrating that there is a variety of strategies, depending on their level of individualisation that these mothers have adopted to cope their situation.

Finally, Chapter 8 draws all the findings together and reflects back to the theoretical framework, discussing critical issues of these mothers' morality, their difficulties as a woman, (and more likely a woman in a disadvantaged situation), and their coping strategies for managing their lives according to their level of individualisation. A conceptual framework is developed for examining such mothers' lived experience that explicates how internal capability and external resources could form a space for these mothers to be individualised in a relatively traditionally society. Policy implications are later addressed in response to these findings. Key contributions and limitations of the research, as well as recommendations for future studies are covered in Chapter 9, in light of the key findings of this study.

Chapter 2 Single Mothers and Social Policies in Taiwan

In the introductory chapter, social norms and the welfare regime in Taiwan were introduced in order to explore how never-married single mothers are situated in a Confucian society and the challenges they might face. However, the ‘group’ they are categorised in, i.e. being a ‘single mother’, should also be examined closely in order to understand shared characteristics and perhaps differences amongst single mothers. In this chapter, the discussion focuses firstly on the increasing trends and the composition of single mothers as a group in Taiwan and compares them across financial and social dimensions in relation to single fathers. How never-married mothers appear specifically in terms of characteristics in comparison to other single mothers is especially highlighted. In the second section, specific single-parent policies implemented by the Taiwanese government under its principle of East Asian welfare regimes is explored. The final section considers the policies that have impacted on the experiences of never-married single mothers.

2.1 The composition of the single-parent household and the issues in relation to gender

Following an introductory discussion of what issues might surround these never-married single mothers in Taiwan, it is now essential to explore the implication for these mothers of being identified as single parents. To do so, this section explores the general trend and composition of single parents as a group, in order to understand how single mothers might be treated in Taiwanese society. In this section, this increase and the trends in the distribution of single-parent families across the past two decades are probed.

Table 2.1 shows that the percentage of lone-parent households in all households with children under 18 years old rose from 5.1% to 12.9% from 1988 to 2007. When compared to other selected developed countries (see Figure 1.2), the percentage is not so remarkable as it remains lower than in the US, the UK and the average of EU countries. It nevertheless is higher than that for Mediterranean countries and Japan, implying that Taiwan may tend to be a conservative society where the single-parent household is not as prevalent as in some other countries. In terms of gender, single mothers outnumbered single fathers. The ratio of single mothers to single fathers in Taiwan was about 5.5 : 4.5 during the twenty

years (1988 to 2007), which showed more single fathers than other western countries in general (Kuo et al., 2009). A national survey of single-parent family conditions in 2010 reported that more than half of the single parents had had this status for at least five years (MoI, 2010) but only one fifth of the single fathers had this status for over ten years (see Table 2.2), which was a smaller proportion than single mothers for whom one fourth were single for more than ten years.

Table 2.1 Lone-parent households by gender in Taiwan: 1988 to 2007

	1988	1993	1998	2003	2007
Lone parent households (numbers)	151,843	210,974	241,397	271,450	359,655
(Percentage of) all households with children under 18 yrs	5.1%	6.7%	7.8%	9.4%	12.9%
Male (%)	43.9	43.5	49.2	39.4	45.4
Female (%)	56.1	56.5	50.8	60.6	54.7
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Cheng et al. (2008).

Table 2.2 Years spent being a single parent (%)

	< one year	One to three years	Three to five years	Five to ten years	Over ten years	Total
Total	4.4	18.4	20.9	32.8	23.6	100.0
Single fathers	4.1	18.5	23.5	33.4	20.6	100.0
Single mothers	4.6	18.2	18.9	32.3	26.0	100.0

Source: MoI (2010).

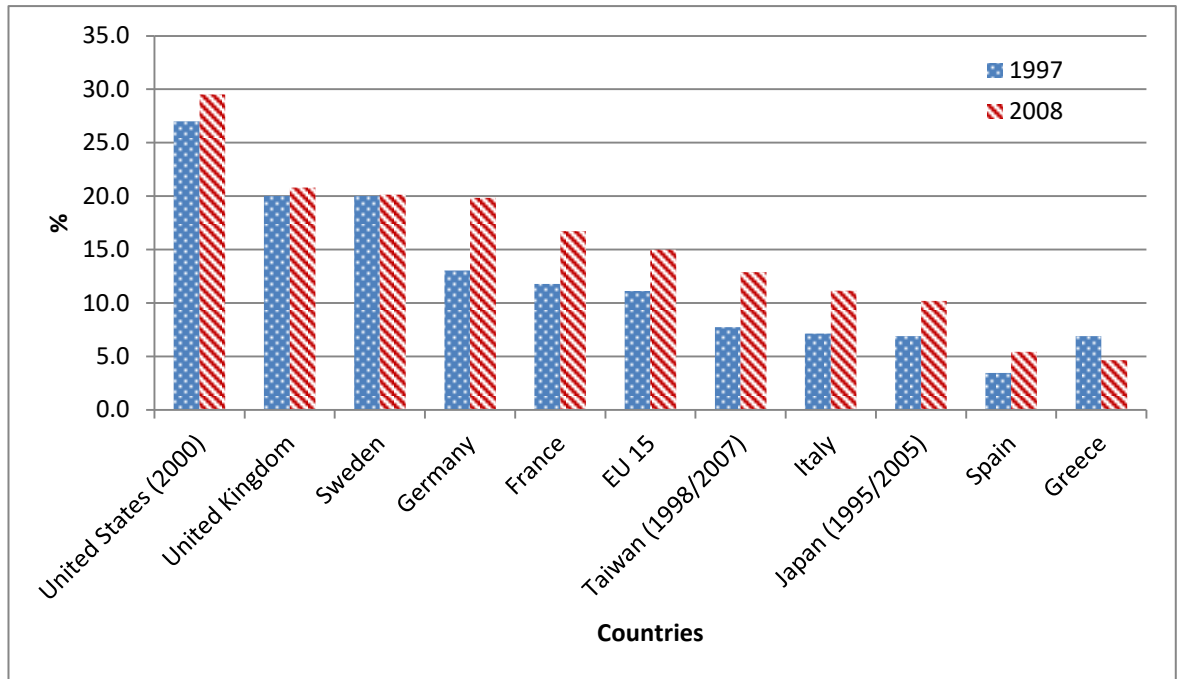


Figure 2.1 Percentage of lone-parent households in all households with dependent children by selected countries, 1997 and 2008

Data drawn from: Cheng et al. (2008), OECD (2010) and U.S. Census Bureau [USCB] (2011).

2.1.1 Widowed, divorced and never-married mothers

Regarding the distribution of single parents, it is essential to note the changing pattern of types of single parents. Two features are highlighted from the statistics: gender differences in the proportions and changing trends in the types of single mothers. First of all, Figures 2.2 and 2.3 demonstrate the proportion of different types of single-father and single-mother families from 1988 to 2007, with the most obvious growth occurring in the shift in terms of the proportion of widowed and the divorced ones. In addition, the proportion of divorced single fathers was higher than divorced single mothers. When the remarriage rate is considered at the same time, the greater remarriage rate for men than women may explain the shorter period of time spent being a single father or the lower proportion of widowed single fathers (See Figures 2.4 and 2.5). Also noteworthy is the decrease in unmarried single fatherhood and the increase in unmarried single motherhood during these years, which might reflect the possibility that fathers were more likely than mothers to keep the child owing to the law. After the change of the Family Part of the Civil Code in the 1990s (see Subsection 2.2.1 for more information), single mothers had finally been granted the right to have their children with them.

When focusing on single mothers, it appears that divorced mothers comprised the major group for the last twenty years with in 1998, the proportion of divorced mothers first outnumbering widowed ones. However, it is clear that the percentage of unmarried single mothers stayed at a low level but slightly grew from 4.5% to 6% from 1988 to 2007.

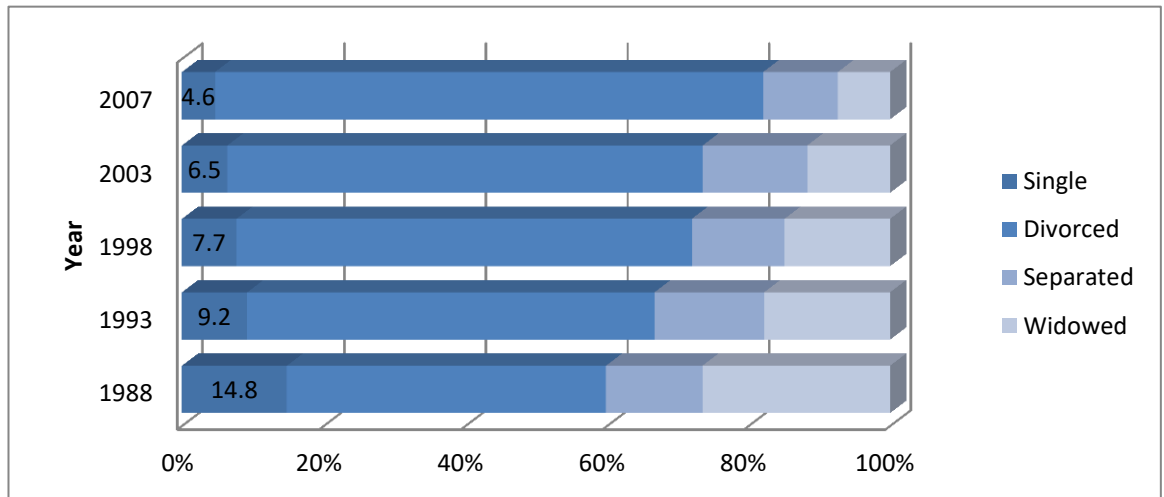


Figure 2.2 Proportion of single fathers

Source: Cheng et al. (2008).

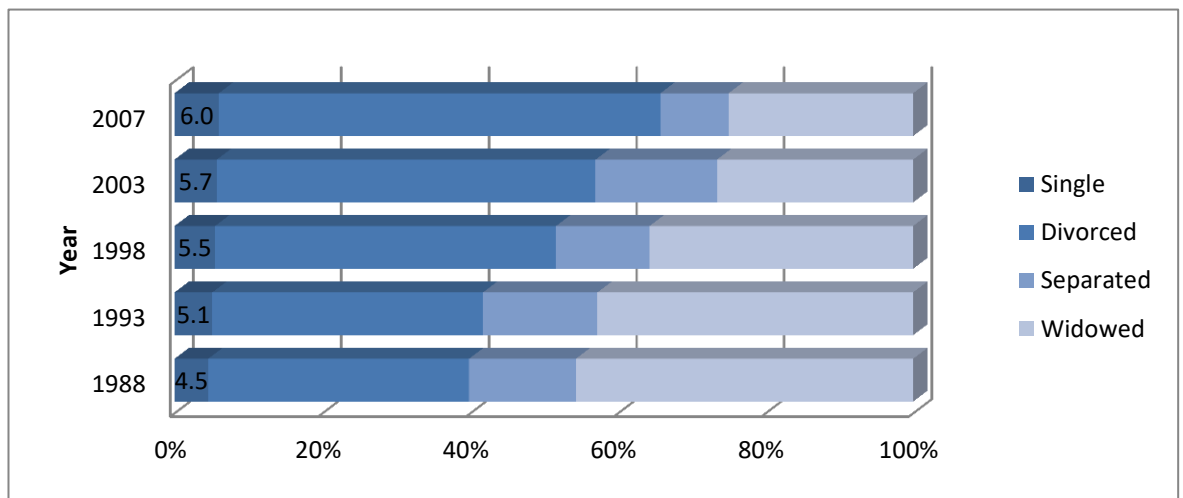


Figure 2.3 Proportion of single mothers according to status

Source: Cheng et al. (2008).

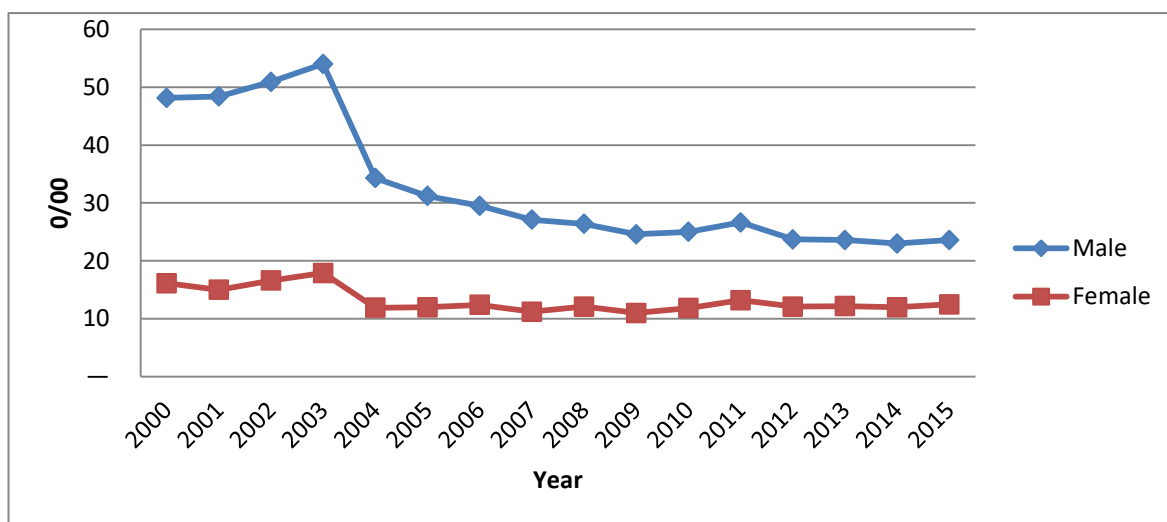


Figure 2.4 Crude remarriage rate from 2000 to 2011, by gender

Source: MoI (2016b).

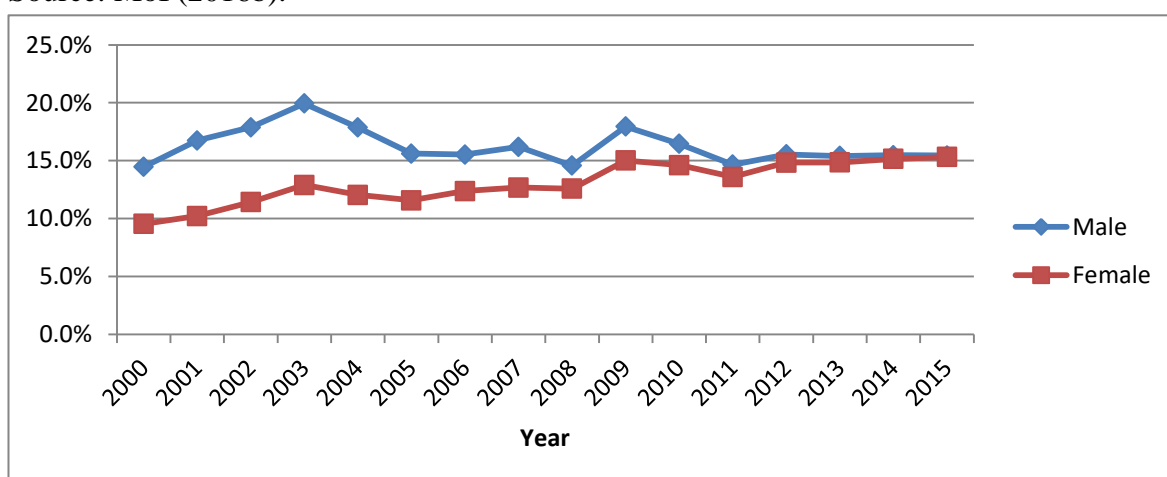


Figure 2.5 Percentage of remarriages from 2000 to 2011, by gender

Source: MoI (2016b).

2.1.2 The inferiority of single mothers from the gender perspective

One way to assess the disadvantaged situation of single mothers is, unfortunately, through comparison with single fathers. In this section, the employment and financial situations of single-parent families are considered by gender with more focus placed on the single mother's situation regarding poverty. Subsequently their care arrangements and possible sources of people to support them are discussed. Lastly, their situation is considered against the backdrop of the Confucian context in which the concept of the male-breadwinner still exerts influence with regards to the single-parent family.

2.1.2.1 Financial status and the feminisation of poverty

Among problems which face the lone parent, economic hardship is the most serious (Pong, 2006; Pong & Wang, 2002). Economic constraints are often brought about by two factors: either their multiple roles which sometimes restrict them from taking up stable and long-term jobs, and the absence of the other partner to help support the family's daily expenditure. Table 2.3 shows the economic profile which summarises the economic situation and activities of lone parents by year and gender. Firstly, it appears that the employment rate for all single parents dropped from 86.7% to 79.8% within the ten year period. Moreover, 83.3% of all single parents were employed in regular jobs in 2010 as compared to 17.7% having irregular employment. According to Cheng et al. (2008), the unemployment rate for single-parent families was always higher than that of married couples with children for the period from 1988 to 2007⁷. Whilst there is no significant difference between single parent males or females regarding the employment rate, a slightly higher proportion of single mothers work in regular jobs than single fathers. In addition to this, the single mothers' average working hours per week is slightly higher than that of single fathers.

Table 2.3 Economic profile of single parents in Taiwan

		Single parents			Single fathers		Single mothers	
		2001	2010		2010		2010	
Employed (%)	Regular	86.7	79.8	83.3	79.7	80.3	79.9	85.1
	Irregular			17.7		19.9		16.1
Working hours per week (hrs)		-	43.65		42.8		44.3	
Average income per month (NTD ⁸)		30,289	26,528		27,159		26,046	
With social assistance (%)		-	38.7		32.7		43.2	
a. Balanced in Account (%)		29.4	24.5		24.4		24.5	
b. More income than expenditure (%)		9.1	4.3		4.2		4.3	
c. Income is not enough (%)		61.5	71.3		71.4		71.2	

Note: a+b+c=100%

Source: MoI (2010).

⁷ For example, it was 4.1% for single-parent households and 0.7% for married couple with child(ren) households in 2007.

⁸ New Taiwanese Dollar. 48 NTD equals 1 pound in 2014.

With regards to single parents' incomes, there is appears a more marked difference between the genders. Although single mothers are more involved in regular work and work for longer, their average income per month, at NTD 26,046, is lower than that for single fathers. Moreover, when looking at the percentage of assistance given to single fathers and mothers, there are fewer fathers than mothers living with social assistance (32.7% and 43.2% respectively), which accords with the phenomenon that Kuo and Wu (2003) identified – the feminisation of single-parent welfare. Notably, from 2001 to 2010, the average income per month for all single parents decreased from NTD 30,289 to NTD 26,528. In addition, fewer parents could balance their accounts or make savings. By contrast more parents reported that their income was not always enough to live on, showing that single parents' income has deteriorated during this decade and has probably become a severe problem for some of these families.

Apart from the gender difference, according to Cheng et al. (2008), the average income was NTD 39,135 in 2007 for a married couple family with children, which was 1.5 fold the income of a single mother family. In sum, it would be reasonable to say that single mothers are more likely to be employed but their household income is likely to be less than that of married couple families with at least one child.

From the perspective of the prevalence of poverty in single-parent households, the phenomenon of the feminisation of poverty can be considered. From the discussion of poverty by various scholars regarding single-parent families in the 1990s, the proportion of poverty among these households was two to three-fold that of general couples family units (Hsueh, 2001; Liu, 2000). As the issue of feminisation of poverty was gradually noticed by researchers in the field of poverty in the 1990s although Huang (1995) and Leu (1998) argued that this phenomenon had existed before these years. In particular, Tong (1992) reported the higher possibility that single mothers would fall into poverty than the general family unit. Cheng (1999) and Wu (2004b) also asserted that, from the perspective of 'asset accumulation', it was more challenging for low-income single mothers to leave poverty due to the patriarchal norm of sons being the inheritors of any wealth being handed down in families. However, more recently researchers have suggested it is necessary to define more specifically what is meant by poverty. With respect to this, Wang (2005)

examined five indices of poverty⁹ with regards to gender difference, finding that only for three indices the absolute values revealed positive effects, while the relative ones were all negative. Moreover, Wang and Ho (2006) investigated poverty through three indices of: incidence, intensity and inequality, and revealed that only the incidence of poverty was significant, and that the proportion of female householders in poverty had nearly doubled from 1990 to 2003. This finding however, they also argued, could have emerged from the increase in the number of female householders. As a result, researchers have tended to be cautious when making conclusions concerning the feminisation of poverty in the Taiwanese context, pointing out that if new perspectives such as the distribution of the income within households were taken in to account, the signs of feminisation of poverty might be even more pronounced (Hsieh, 2011; Lin, 2008c).

With respect to the gender difference between single mothers and single fathers in poverty, the situation was unclear during the 1990s. Wang (2005) pointed out that the proportion of single-mother households in poverty has been always more than single-father households since the 1980s. From the income point of view, this is similar to the situation in 2010, presented in Table 2.3. However, Hsueh (2004) maintained that the poverty incidence amongst the divorced/separated single-father households was higher than that for the divorced/separated single-mother households. Moreover, by adopting the concept of relative poverty, Hsueh (ibid) examined poverty trends by types of household in the 1990s and revealed that being a single parent was not necessarily the main reason for entering poverty, but rather, having dependent children was the key factor. As Cheng et al. (2008) have concluded from their qualitative research that ‘class and gender have displayed the same influence on single parents, sometimes with the former having even greater than the latter’(p.181), it might be argued that there was a possibility of feminisation of poverty among single parents. However, more about the impact of types or class between single parents might need to be examined in different genders.

⁹ The five indices are: (1) the proportion of males and females in the population in poverty; (2) the proportion of male and female householders among households in poverty; (3) the poverty rate among male and female householders, and the ratio of the male/female poverty rates; (4) the poverty rate of single mother and single father households, and the ratio of the single mother/father poverty rates; (5) the poverty rate of elderly male and female one-person households, and the ratio of the male/female poverty rates.

2.1.2.2 Care and supporters

Children inevitably become the centre of a single parent's life after their separation from their spouses. In the latest report from the MoI (2010), about 50% of single parents' children are aged from 6 to 14 years old, and 85% of them are still students. For parents this may mean that they are facing not only the pressure of spending time taking care of the children in addition to their paid work, but also have to meet all kinds of expenditures such as children's nursery fees and schooling fees. As shown in Table 2.4, it appears that the main carers for single parents' children, aged from 0 to 5 years old or 6 to 11 years old, tend to be the single parents themselves, the single parents' parents, and day care centres or after school centres. These sources of care however differ slightly according to aspects of time requirements and parents' gender. The main carers were mostly the single parents themselves in 2001, but in 2010, more than one third of single parents chose to send their children to grandparents for care. More specifically, half of single fathers contributed to this result, while most single mothers chose to use day care centres for their 0 to 5 year-old children (especially if they worked during the day), and then took care on their own of their 6 to 11 year-old children.

Table 2.4 Proportion of main carers in single-parent families by age of children and gender: from 2001 to 2010

	0 to 5 yrs				6 to 11 yrs			
	Total		Fathers	Mothers	Total		Fathers	Mothers
	2001	2010	2010	2010	2001	2010	2010	2010
On my own	<u>30.5</u>	24.2	14.0	29.8	<u>48.3</u>	31	22.4	<u>40.9</u>
On my own (to working places)	3.1	1.1	1.0	1.1	2.9	1.5	0.7	2.3
Parents	22.1	<u>34.2</u>	<u>46.5</u>	27.4	17.8	<u>36.5</u>	<u>49.5</u>	21.5
Ex-spouse	3.9	0.3	0.7	-	2.5	0.1	0.0	0.3
Parents in law	4.5	1.4	0.0	2.2	3.5	2.1	1.4	2.8
Relatives or friends	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	2.9	1.7	2.5	3.3
Neighbours	0.2	0.5	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1
Baby-sitters	4.8	3.4	3.4	3.4	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.4
Day care centres or after school centres	27.9	32.8	31.0	<u>33.8</u>	16.5	23.9	21.8	26.3
Others	1.3	0.2	0.7	-	0.9	0.2	0.2	0.3
No one	-	-	-	-	5.2	1.4	0.3	2.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: MoI (2010).

In more depth, single parents' choices of main carers could be related to the support available for them from their close social network (Lin & Chin, 1992). According to Hsieh, et al. (2014), the type of single parenthood and the difference of gender could both have impact on single parents' consideration of the co-residence arrangement, which requires close examination under the lens of Confucian familial ideology. In Table 2.5, which shows the living arrangements of single parents for 2001 and 2010, it is indicated that the percentage of single parents who lived only with children decreased from 51.8% to 44.9%. More single parents choose to live with their parents (and sometimes others), being only 36.9% in 2001 and 47.9% in 2010. However, this does not mean that all single parents will choose to live with their parents. On the contrary, more single fathers than single mothers chose to live with their parents in 2010 (67% fathers and 33% mothers). In this situation would appear that it is generally easier for single fathers to access resources, i.e. their cohabitating parents, to help them take care of their children. However, Hsieh et al. (2014) pointed out that, some single fathers saw their family as a burden, which they could not

escape from when they were unable to become part of their support. This difference regarding fathers and mothers' choices together with their choices regarding the main carers they draw on, underline the distinct gender aspects regarding sources of support.

Table 2.5 Living arrangements of single parents by year and by gender

		Single parents		Fathers	Mothers
		2001	2010	2010	2010
Live only with children		<u>51.8</u>	44.9	29.8	<u>56.6</u>
Live with children and parents	only	21.9	<u>31.0</u>	<u>47.2</u>	18.6
	and others	15.0	<u>16.9</u>	<u>19.8</u>	14.6
Live with children and parents in law	only	1.6	2.0	0.1	3.5
	and others	0.6	0.4	0.1	0.7
Live with children and siblings	only	3.0	1.9	1.1	2.4
	and others	0.7	1.0	0.7	1.2
Live with children and other relatives		5.6	2.0	1.3	2.5
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: MoI (2010).

2.1.2.3 Summary

From the statistics presented in the above subsection, three aspects of single parents' lives emerge, namely, the proportion of them among all families; their financial and employment situation; and support with childcare. Firstly, the prevalence of this type of household has grown rapidly and amongst them, the divorced single parent was the largest group. Second, the single parent risks a higher possibility of experiencing poverty than married couple families. Further, with respect to gender difference, single mothers may risk higher rates of poverty than single fathers, and thus are apparently more likely to obtain social assistance than single fathers. As Sheu (2000, 2002) has argued regarding the poverty of women in Taiwan, it is possible to claim that this phenomenon is fostered by traditional Chinese family ideology. On the one hand, this belief system rationalises the poor support offered from the state, and on the other, justifies the lack of entitlements underpinning women's economic independence in the social insurance system.

Third, the care burden of child(ren) and access to resources vary between genders. That is, single fathers tend to receive support from their own family, especially their parents and are more likely to live with them as well as provide support. However, single mothers are

usually the main carers of their own child(ren), and live outside their household of origin. From the perspective of support for single mothers the above data indicates that they may be disadvantaged and without much informal support. In the Confucian context, family living arrangements typically follow the tradition of filial duty combined with parental reciprocity. That is, sons are accepted as being the inheritors of family property and other forms of wealth. Of interest to this particular study is the notion that this traditional stance leads to sons being more likely to live with their parents and being offered sufficient help with childcare, even when the son has become divorced (Hsieh et al, 2014; Lee, 2001). By contrast, women are conventionally excluded from their family of origin after the marriage and are expected to be with their husband's kin. In research discussing Taiwanese single mothers' support from their conjugal family and the family of origin, Pong (2005) reported that the role of divorced single mothers vanishes from both types of family because of these strong norms. She found that the traditional sayings such as 'when women are married, they are just like water that had been split and never has to, nor should, come back' and 'women are born and die for her conjugal family' still strongly persist not only in both families but also amongst single mothers themselves, and this may force them to adopt different strategies from single fathers when searching for family-based help. In the case of never-married single mothers, as they were not married and hence, have not become a member of a partner's family, nowadays, the original family might be willing to offer support. Hsieh et al. (2014) pointed out that, as long as they are not married, according to traditional Confucian familial ideology, they are still a daughter who is allowed to rely on their family. These authors also argued that this could be a trade-off as they are also very likely to be expected to be a resource of care for their elderly parents.

The statistics presented above offer insight into never-married single mothers' lived experiences, noting that they form a minority, not only in terms of their number amongst all single mothers, but also with regards to their position in society as giving birth out of wedlock is not considered as honourable behaviour in the Confucian context. Moreover, their disadvantaged position is manifest with regards to their economic status, their opportunity to enter the labour market and their reliance on family relationships. Having outlined these dimensions above, the policy which shapes, or being shaped by these features is discussed in the next section in order to reveal the context in which this group of mothers live.

2.2 Social policies for single parents

From the previous section it can be seen that there are various issues can be discussed about Taiwanese single-parent families. How they form their family, what elements (i.e. gender or age) might affect their economic ability and their social relationships and resources are key questions to explore and can have huge impact on how they live on their lives. Since the 1980s, the rising number of single parent families have begun to draw attention not only to researchers but also to policy makers (Lin, 2012). Chang (2008) pointed out how in the modern Taiwanese society, the expectations on single parents to carry out dual roles in both care and work spheres, are part of the main burden they experience and therefore form the main focus for policy design. This concern resonates with arguments put forward by Lewis and Hobson (1997) regarding the pressures placed on European single mother families, after Lewis (1992) introduced the duo-earner model thereby identify gender in the categorisation pertaining to welfare regimes. The policy approaches thus varied between countries when they might insist on following or renouncing this model. However, despite the similar challenges in balancing work and care, it can be very different in terms of the employment environment as in the East Asian context, working hours are longer than in European countries¹⁰ and it is very often to see employers overworked without payment when they are required to fulfil their duty¹¹ (Lin, 2016; Lu, 2013). This has, to some extent, contributed to the challenges which the Taiwanese government encountered when dealing with issues in relation to the single-parent families.

Following on the above-mentioned, in this section, the laws and welfare policies which have been introduced to support the increasing numbers of single-parent families and their needs are set out. This covers the amendment of civil legislations which helped to protect women after divorce, as well as the welfare benefits/physical services which aimed at

¹⁰ According to Labour Standards Act (1984), the legal working hour in Taiwan is 40 hours a week (Article 30) (Ministry of Labour [MoL], 2015). It is of note that the difference in working hours between Taiwanese men and women does not appear to be as large as in some other countries. However, some researchers have attributed this pattern to there being a lack of legislation, particularly with regards to regulating part time working hours (Liang, 2003; Lin, 2004, p.33)..

¹¹ According to Labour Standards Act (1984), the working hours for certain type of work can be discussed flexibly between employers and employees (Article 84-1). It is widely criticised that in this way, employers can demand employees to overwork any time when they require them.

addressing financial and social distress that can occur owing to single parenthood. The principles of these welfare services in a context in which balancing work and care is considered essential will also be addressed. Finally, a model suggested by Kilkey (2000) is applied, this provides an assessing tool to examine the type of policy settings that Taiwan belongs to.

2.2.1 The amendments of Family Part of Civil Code and the rise of the divorce rate: the catalyst for single-parent family welfare

Before 1980s, the Family Part of the Civil Code (promulgated in 1930) was a key piece of legislation which defined women's subordinate position to men and stated that all property and children automatically belonged to the man in a marriage, even if a couple divorced. Even though first revised in 1987, it maintained the rights of the husband in that he had to consent if there was an agreement concerning changing property ownership or family members' names. Liu (1995) summarised the whole of this part of the Civil Code as being indicative and a clearly presenting Taiwan as a conservative patriarchal society, and have kept many unhappy couples together in a doomed marriage relationship..

It has been widely confirmed that the female labour participation rate has been rising since the 1980s due to increased economic development and the prevalence of greater access to education (Hsiao, 2011; Huang, 1994; Kuo, 2009; Yi, 1982). This is believed to bring opportunities for employed women to become economically independent and therefore a motivation for the call of amendments of the Family Part of the Civil Code (Yu, 2002, 2005). In the 1990s, the Family Part of the Civil Code became one of the acts which was constantly revised in: 1996, 1998 and again in 2002 due to active women's right movements. Under these revisions, after 1996, the idea of 'children's best interests' was taken in to consideration when parents divorced (in Articles 1055 & 1055-1), which means the child's father will not earn the custody of their children as a matter of course. Moreover, after 1998, husbands' surnames were not necessarily added to the wives' names (Article 1000); husbands' places of domicile were also not assumed to be the wives' (Articles 1000 and 1002). However, before 2002, matrimonial property was considered as 'conjoined', which ignored wives' independent rights to their properties, before and after marriage (Chang, 2009; Lin, 2011). Family Part of the Civil Code were changed regarding the matrimonial property system, so as to recognise the value of domestic work when often it

is conducted by the wives. Subsequently, divorcing husbands and wives could contest rights to property where it was generated together during the period of marriage.

After these changes, it can be seen that the divorcing women would obtain greater freedom in particular on the finance after a post-divorce life. According to Jeng and McKenry (2001), the increase in the divorce rate in Taiwan is driven by the implementation of these changes in laws regarding women's rights. It can be seen in Figure 2.6 that the crude divorce rate had been rising since the 1980s and reached its pick in 2003 before gradually decreasing. Combined with the statistics presented in Subsection 2.1.1, it seems that the rising divorce rate had also contributed to the main increases in single-parent households.

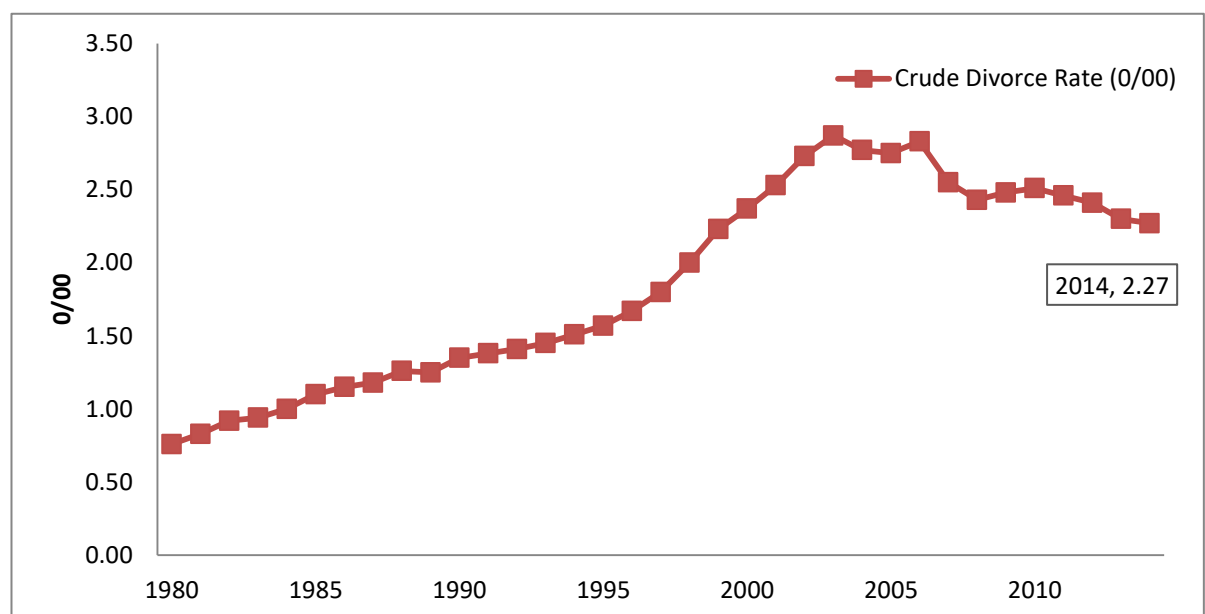


Figure 2.6 Crude Divorce Rate from 1980 to 2010

Source: MoI (2015).

2.2.2 Welfare benefits for single parents

Although the rate of divorce and the proportion of single-parent households has been increasing in recent decades, single parents as a group with particular needs has only recently gained the attention of policymakers. As mentioned in Subsection 1.2.2, it is not until 2000s that the state began to develop its Family Policies amongst the Social Welfare Policy Guidelines (W. Y. Lin, 2012), in which it specifically highlighted the principle to provide support for families and share its burden of care. However, it is widely argued that policies designed for single parents still have been based on government support for those who experienced an urgent need or hardship, and largely took the form of a residual type

of welfare provision (Chang, 2007; Kuo et al., 2009). Moreover, the welfare that was provided was fragmented as it embraced different policies and initiatives, including: the Labour Insurance Act (1958), the Act of Assistance for Family in Hardship (2000), Public Assistance Act (PAA) (1980), and Children and Youths' Welfare Act (2003), and was not under an integrated scheme. This section examines several specific policies related to single mothers and their children's welfare.

Two specific financial policies are related to the welfare of single-parent families in Taiwan: the Widower's pension (or allowance) (2008) and the Act of Assistance for a Family in Hardship (2000). The former came under the Labour Insurance Act designed in 2008, and finally established to secure the economic status of widow(er)s (Bureau of Labour Insurance [BLI], 2011). A new scheme was introduced in 2009 under the National Pension scheme, to ensure that when the insured person died, there would be payment for the survivors. It was paid to widows or widowers, and their children aged under 20, if their income level was under the lowest expenditure per person per month (NTD 20,008 from July 2015). The rate was set at around 1.55% (1.3% for the National Pension) of the insured's monthly salary multiplied by its working ages for pension benefit. If the insured person had participated in the labour market for more than two years, the allowance was issued for 30 months and if the amount was under NTD 3,000 a month, they received the NTD 3,000 instead. However, divorced couples were not eligible to apply, and only their children could be able to make a claim.

In 2000, the Act of Assistance for Family in Hardship (AFH), which directly focused on the welfare of the single-parent family, was enacted. It was proposed by a legislator, Chi-wen Chiang, who had a background in the administration of the Social Affairs Bureau when she was working for a regional local government. Based on the observation of the practice of social assistance in the local government, she suggested providing another scheme of cash benefits, especially for female householders who suddenly fell into hardship (Lai, 2004). Before the AFH, there were no specific policies aimed at helping single parents and social assistance was only available for the most disadvantaged. In essence, this act tried to address several aspects of single parents' difficulties under one piece of legislation in order to protect their economic situation and the rights of their children. It consisted of a range of cash benefits for single parents, including: emergency life assistance, living allowances and education allowances for children, medical subsidies,

nursery allowances and a litigation subsidy. For single parents aged over 20, they could also apply for a career development loan. Although the legislation covers the general needs of the single-parent family when facing hardship, it still tends to be a form of benefit intended for dealing with family financial emergencies. Moreover, it did not extend the protection to the single-father family before 2009, and it was not until much later that more distinct types of families were included, such as the grandparents-grandchildren family unit. As a whole, even though the AFH lowered the poverty risk for children of the single-father family, it has been reported that there has been no significant effect on this risk regarding single-mother family units (Lee, 2012).

In the beginning, the implementation of the AFH encountered several difficulties, including: being poorly implemented and understood at the local government, its overlap with other benefits, a lack of government funding as well as the lack of information provided to potential applicants (Lai, 2004). The number of applicants was thus small in the early years of its existence, but it is of note that the number of applicants grew throughout the subsequent years. Table 2.6 presents the number of female applicants in each category (clause) in recent years. The applicants can only be qualified for one clause once in their life, but can receive different benefits at the same time. The most frequent reasons for applying appear under Clause 1 (widowed or husband missing) and Clause 5 (single parents with no working ability or unable to work), but both have fluctuated over the six years. Further, the percentage of Clause 2 (abandoned or divorced by judicial decree) and Clause 4 (unmarried pregnant) applicants increased and the percentage of unmarried pregnant applicants has shown the highest growth.

Table 2.6 The number of AFH applicants

	Clause1		Clause2		Clause3		Clause4		Clause5		Clause6		Clause7	
Year	Husband is Dead or Missing		Abandoned with Malice, and (had) Divorced by Judicial Decree		Domestic Violence		Unmarried Pregnancy from Over 3 Months to 2 Months after Accouchement		Single Parent with No Working Ability or Unable to Work		Whose Husband is Sentenced to Penal Servitude for Over 1 yr. and in Prison		Live in hardship	
		%		%		%		%		%		%		%
2006	3,533	34.6	634	6.2	1,723	16.9	17	0.2	3,849	37.7	253	2.5	212	2.1
2007	4,950	43.0	878	7.6	867	7.5	331	2.9	3,926	34.1	300	2.6	271	2.4
2008	6,308	48.9	1,130	8.8	780	6.0	501	3.9	3,410	26.4	452	3.5	325	2.5
2009	8,447	44.8	1,755	9.3	1,131	6.0	711	3.8	5,804	30.8	696	3.7	311	1.6
2010	8,442	41.9	1,905	9.4	1,105	5.5	997	4.9	6,627	32.9	792	3.9	292	1.4
2011	8,132	40.3	2,174	10.8	1,062	5.3	1,164	5.8	6,474	32.1	836	4.1	320	1.6
2012	8,340	44.0	2,147	11.3	1,129	6.0	1,689	8.9	4,523	23.9	819	4.3	295	1.6
2013	7,691	44.3	1,863	10.7	1,022	5.9	1,686	9.7	4,045	23.3	780	4.5	288	1.7
2014	7,307	41.8	1,948	11.1	1,045	6.0	1,856	10.6	3,910	22.4	826	4.7	592	3.4
2015	7735	44.3	2009	11.5	984	5.6	2,003	11.5	3615	20.7	737	4.2	359	2.1

Source: Ministry of Health and Welfare [MHW] (2016a).

2.2.3 Other social provisions received by single parents

Table 2.7 contains information taken from four acts and several other programmes and summarises policy helping single parents deal with their economic situation and childrearing problems. There are two dimensions regarding how the government gives services to single parents: one is according to the subjects and their conditions, and the other, is according to the kind or nature of the services. The columns in Table 2.7 indicate the services given due to the situation of single parents and their children, in particular, in terms of their disadvantaged circumstances, and/or their struggles to stay in the labour market. The rows note the benefits and services single parents may access when they encounter specific troubles. In addition, the items in bold highlight acts or programmes that are uniquely applicable to single parents, whilst regular type face show means-tested or universal (with lines) services for which single parents who meet the qualifying conditions can take up. Universal programmes are few in numbers and could not protect adequately insecure workers, such as single parents.

Before the AFH, many of these benefits or services were mostly provided by the PAA (1980) and only the least advantaged single parents could apply. If single parents had the capability to work, or proven to have family who were capable of helping them, they were not covered. What the earlier social assistance system appeared to ignore was the fact that even if those single parents were employed, they could sometimes be restricted to part-time work or low-paid situations because of the burden of caring for their children. This could mean that their economic resources were relatively unstable and they are more likely to fall into poverty even when they were working (i.e. being 'working poor') (Chen, 2014; Chen, 2002a; Wu, 2004b). Moreover, because they were considered often to have failed in the marriage relationship, their existing and former social resources might no longer continue to be available to help them (Pong, 2005). Only after the enactment of the AFH was this limitation regarding help changed slightly. The income means-tested level was set at 2.5 times higher than the lowest living cost and only considered the immediate family within applicants' households which expanded security to a larger group of single parents. The legislation still does not cover parents who needed different types of assistances other than financial support and consequently some additional extra programmes from different local governments were initiated for providing consulting services, parental education and family visits.

The Children Welfare Act (1993) was another important source of welfare for single parents in need. It was combined with the Youth Welfare Act and became the Children and Youth Welfare Act (2003). It mainly offers support for children and juveniles in a family in need, including means-tested allowances, public care facilities, respite shelters if families are dysfunctional, and other services which assist families to support, supplement, or replace functions needed for taking care of children. Liao (2002) analysed the welfare which the legislation offered and found it aimed to 'maintain and protect the link between the parents and the children within their families' (p.77) and that the state served as a supporter of families. In 2012, the law was renamed The Protection of Children and Youths Welfare and Rights Act (2012), and more types of welfare provisions for children and teenagers were added. The definition of children's welfare has been mainly concerned with economic support or their personal safety, however, more recently, it has gradually included a developmental aspect emphasising the protection the development of childhood and teenage-hood (Yeh, 2002). Therefore, several measures, for example, offering

childcare, after-school care and parental education and consulting services were launched, from which single-parents and their families could benefit.

Apart from the financial support, it is essential to discuss the childcare and employment support (in the columns) which are designed under the pressure of low fertility rates and an aging society¹². This demanded that the government provide the means for external resources to support families facing this challenge (Lin, 2002). In 2002, the Gender Equality in Employment Law (GEEL) was enacted, being revised in 2008 and 2011. It gave more family care leave in general, initiated parental leave for fathers, and extended rights to all workers instead of only those employed in big companies. In 2009, the application of parental leave allowance which had been postponed from the 2002 enactment of the GEEL, officially commenced. Employment Insurance schemes were able to provide stable financial resources for funding the new demand for parental leave. With respect to this Tsai (2012) stated that the responsibility of balancing work and family was no longer just that of the family but now shared along with employers and the state. Following from this legislation, several policies were developed for providing an affordable childcare system. The childcare system was set up to consist of two sub-systems: public/private care facilities¹³ and child minder services¹⁴, the latter of which policy has

¹² The proportion of elderly people in the national population was estimated to have increased from 7% (in 1993) to 14% in 25 years (Concil of Economic Planning and Development [CEPD], 2012), whilst the proportion of children fell owing to the decreasing fertility rate, being just 0.9 per woman in 2010 (Mol, 2015). Both situations, flagged up the pressing future risks of the country having a smaller pool of potential workers and over burdening the next generation of workers with the demands of the care burden. These together with the female labour participation rate, created a dilemma within the family unit for women regarding the balancing of paid work and care responsibilities

¹³ The childcare facilities in Taiwan were once divided into two systems administered respectively by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Interior. One is kindergartens, which focus more on purpose of education; and the other is nursery schools and Infant centres, which take more responsibility for caring. Because of the similarities of their function but different regulations, the idea of integration of the two facilities was started in 1997 (Child Welfare League Foundation [CWLF], 2010). However, due to arguments about the distinct characteristics of other services such as infant centres, home care and after-school care, integration only applied to kindergartens and nurseries after the Preschool Education and Care Law was enacted in 2012. Other remaining facilities mentioned are regulated by The Protection of Children and Youths Welfare and Rights Act (CWLF, 2012).

focus more recently (Fu & Wang, 2011). In this policy reform atmosphere, single-parent families are expected to benefit from these universal measures and can arrange their childcare and work with greater freedom. In terms of the employment aspect, moreover, several vocational training or entrepreneur loan projects (see Table 2.7) are also launched to support single-parents' needs in terms of working flexibly and independence so they can afford to cope with their children (Lin & Lee, 2007; Mo, 2011). However, these measures have been roundly criticised for not being effective enough yet to deal with the fundamental structural issues existing in the labour market. That is, women continue to be the subordinate labour power in a patriarchal/capitalistic society, and it has never been easy for mothers, particularly single ones, to return to the labour market once they have had to leave it (Chen, 2014; Chen, 2002a; Wu, 2004b; Yang, 2009).

As to housing support, it is well-known that the housing policy in Taiwan is mainly called public housing policy, where the state intended to look after only the public servants such as military, or teachers, as well as the family/household with lowest income. As Yip and Chang (2003) have pointed out, most of the houses nowadays in Taiwan are supplied by the private market without too much state intervention, which is one of the characteristics of an East Asian Welfare State that the Taiwanese government has demonstrated. In this policy background, single parent families' household income has to be lower than a certain level to fit in the criteria so they can stay in public housing. This means they are considered similar to other disadvantaged groups such as the elderly or the disabled as they are also included in a low-income household category. According to Chen (2002b), current public housing supplied to single mothers is either too obsolete or are in run-down neighbourhoods with high rates of crime. The rented public houses are better in terms of quality and neighbourhoods, but there are long waiting lists and they also cost a greater portion of monthly household income than traditional public housing. There are other options such as half-way homes provided by local governments, which only allow single mothers to stay for maximum of two years (Cheng, 2003; Yang, 2009). Overall, the social

¹⁴ The child minder service was once highly market-oriented when the 'community child minder system' was launched in 2000. However, in order to establish a more complete public childcare system, the former child minder system was transformed into a 'child minder administration and carer subsidy programme'. On the one hand, child minders needed to possess a certification of practice and registered within a system co-managed by the government and assigned NGOs. On the other, every carer could have a subsidy of up to 2000-4000 NTD for every child they took in for care (Child Welfare Bureau[CWB], 2008).

housing provided for single-mother families are not effective enough to help in reducing economic insecurity in the long term, only providing a temporary residence with basic options for the mother and her children. Moreover, from a cultural perspective, Lee (2001) also emphasised that, within the Confucian family ideology, there is very limited investment by the family for the woman in terms of housing. The unequal distribution of inheritance results in most of the property going to sons. This means that when a woman becomes a single mother, either widowed or divorced, there are only a few cases where they were supported by their original family or family-in-law with housing resources. This allies with what has been presented in Subsection 2.1.2.2 regarding single parents' co-residential choices. In general, housing stands as a contentious issue for Taiwanese single mothers, for whether public or private, the resources are few and unstable.

Table 2.7 Welfare for single-parent families in Taiwan

	Living Allowance or Subsidy (Means-tested programmes)	Childcare	Employment Support programme	Other subsidy and in-kind programmes
Public Assistance Act (1980)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Low-income living allowance; children living allowance 2. Funeral Subsidy; procreation subsidy(Article16); housing allowance or repairing subsidy(Article16-1); reduced of tuition fee (Article16-2); medical subsidy(Article18); emergency aid(Article21); 	Nursing subsidy; education subsidy(Article16)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vocational training, employment services, business initiation aid, or work relief programmes 2. Career counselling, loan interest support for establishing careers, subsidies for transport when job seeking, temporary childcare, and allowances for daytime care within the job seeking or vocational training period. 	Homecare services (Article16); free nutrition lunch
Children and Youth Welfare Act (2003)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Living allowance for children in disadvantaged circumstance; emergency relief for child and youth living subsidy 2. Adolescents and children's medical aid(Article27); 	<u>Public child care facilities(Article75)</u>		Services for children and youth who are pregnant and in hardship and services for parents who are not able to raise their children under 12; placement for teenagers under 18 whose family are dysfunctional; after-school care; <u>consulting services and parental education(Article23)</u>

The Act of Assistance for Family in Hardship (2000)	Emergency relief for the misfortunate women(Article6); child living allowance(Article7)	Priority to enter the childcare facility and child day care allowance(Article10); student aid loan(Article8)	Running a business loan(Article12)	Medical subsidy(Article9); litigation subsidy(Article11)
The Gender Equality of Employment Law (GEEL) (2002)		<u>Childcare facilities (when the number of employees in the enterprise is over 250)(Article23)</u>	<u>Maternity leave(Article15); parental leave(Article16); family care leave(Article20)</u>	
Other benefits or services	1. Widower's pension and allowance (Labour insurance Annuity System and the National Pension System (2008))	2. Child minder subsidies; 3. <u>Childcare allowance (provisions vary by local governments);</u> 4. <u>Tax relief for each child.</u>	5. Vocational training, allowance or subsidy (Article 24 Employment Services Act (1992)) 6. Unemployment benefits; early reemployment incentives; vocational training allowances; parental leave allowance (with specific period of insurance enrolment) (Article10 Employment Insurance Act (2002))	7. <u>Procreation allowance per birth</u> ; pre-school voucher for children under 5. 8. An annual programme for empowering single parents for continuing education. 9. Local single parent welfare services centres 10. Public housing or rented public housing; half-way homes or shelters provided by local government or NGOs (with two-year tenancy as maximum)

Source: Kuo et al. (2009) and Chang (2007).

2.2.4 The ‘poor worker’ single-parents policy model

After presenting the services and benefits which single parents might have the right to claim from the state, the nature of the welfare regime in which Taiwanese single mothers are located may be assessed by applying a Western researcher’s framework. Kilkey (2000) addressed the adequacy of the social rights the state offers to single mothers, and may serve as a useful scheme to evaluate the services Taiwanese single mothers may be provided with to manage their lives. The framework is composed of three dimensions: the social rights attached to: care-giving, paid work and to transitions between periods of care-giving and paid work, and despite limitations of some information related to income before and after tax or housing costs, much can still be elicited from the use of this. That is, drawing on the information summarised above in Table 2.7, the social provision offered to single mothers related to care-giving appears to be relatively little in terms of exemptions from paid work and they rarely have rights regarding time to care. Moreover, only a few allowances are offered for full-time care, including: the procreation allowance for every child and a small amount of childrearing allowance for children in hardship or living in a low-income family. This is not enough to support full-time care-giving. Apart from these allowances, subsidies for health insurance and primary education are provided on a means-tested basis and as a result, it is reasonable to conclude that the lack of resources for care-giving is one factor that pushes Taiwanese single mothers to join the labour market.

From the perspective of social rights for working mothers, the state offers more services in relation to employment for single mothers. First of all, the childcare facilities including kindergartens, nurseries, and after-school clubs in primary schools give priority to single mothers in hardship or low-income status to enter. Subsidies are offered when families cannot afford the tuition fees or in particular when their children study in private childcare facilities. Secondly, the GEEL (2002) provides for maternity leave, parental leave and family care leave for all families, and supplies a parental leave allowance at 60% of income for six months. Thirdly, although not as rigorous as under the UK or the US governmental schemes, single mothers have been encouraged to have vocational training or continuing education while a certain amount of living or childcare allowance is provided as financial compensation. Moreover, there are loans for single parents to apply for establishing their own businesses, which encourage them to work part-time and help reconcile their work and care responsibilities. In addition to these incentives, the allowance

and subsidies are provided if their income is lower than an acceptable amount, which may have a ‘pull effect’ for encouraging single mothers to join the labour market.

In terms of social rights regarding the transition between periods of care giving and paid work, the state lacks mechanisms for the transition from work to care, but provides slightly more incentives for the transition from care to work, e.g. early reemployment incentives and vocational training benefits. However, because of the lack of comparative information on income before or after tax/health/housing expenditure and the income replacement rate for being a full-time care-giver, it is not necessarily the case that Taiwanese single mothers fall in the group termed ‘poor workers’ as Kilkey (ibid) has suggested regarding Japanese single mothers. What can be inferred from the above section is that the incomes of single-mother’s families were relatively low compared with that of married couple families and their poverty rate was higher than that for the married couple family unit in the 1990s. Overall, as mentioned, the policies designed for Taiwanese single parents have been criticised by scholars for still being too patchy and lacking integration. Moreover, they consider a single-parent family as an economic-insecure unit, which only need to be supported with supplementary social assistance instead of fully equipping mothers as workers or carers (Cheng et al., 2008; Kuo et al., 2009). It was generally thought that this approach is following the principles of East Asian Welfare regimes and is not necessarily helpful for improving their economic situation.

2.3 Policies and never-married single mothers

The policies discussed previously are applied to all single parents who are in need, including the group of never-married single mothers in Taiwan. However, there are some services which are mainly utilised by never-married mothers when they go through experiences of being pregnant, and giving birth to a child, then nurture the child without a husband in their life, which for example, a divorce mother rarely experiences. Based on the circumstances they might face and choices they might have to make, the policy landscape exists become crucial for deciding to become a never-married single mother. The legislation in relation to abortion – the Genetic Health Act - is one of it, as are services for adoption. Housing services, as well as the state’s regulation with regards to the recognition of illegitimate children are also essential issues when these never-married mothers consider

how to constructing their life in the future. This section will thus focus on the policies which might support their decisions, and their implications for these mothers.

2.3.1 Genetic Health Act and having an abortion

The launch of the Genetic Health Act has been well recognised by the researchers to be of specific purpose, in particular for population control. During the 1950s, the civil government actively encouraged women to have numerous births in order to ensure a supply of human resources to work in the military and agricultural sectors, and the fertility rate was the highest in the world, being recorded at 7.05 in 1951. However, owing to the prevalence of diseases among infants and the social and economic burdens that the high number of births placed on the government, family planning projects were soon introduced in the following decade (Sun, 1989). From the year 1964, the government started to provide a range of contraceptive options for women. The Genetic Health Act (GHA) (1984) is the law which generated from this background. In Article 9, it states that a woman can have an induced abortion by a certificated doctor if her pregnancy or childbirth was diagnosed as being ‘likely to affect her mental health or family life’. However, this Act also presented several aspects of controversies. According to Chen (2013a), first of all, its initial purpose was to control the population without considering the mother’s rights towards choices such as abortion. It is highly likely with this background that mothers who are pregnant, but lack the economic ability to raise the child, would feel pressure from the state to take advantage of the GHA and have an abortion (Mao, 2012). However, a further controversy is that, whilst the state allows women in Taiwan to search for an abortion service ‘legally’ under certain conditions, in the reality it is actually still against the law. In the Criminal Code of the Republic of China (1935), Offences of Abortion was still listed as one of the ‘sin’ which the state would punish. In Article 288 and 289, the woman who seeks and has abortion as well as the doctor who conducts it would be sentenced to prison for up to six month. In this way, it has become a quite ambiguous area where women might be persecuted for seeking abortion services. This prompted Wu (2010) to comment how this ‘crime’, indeed, was used as a tool for the patriarchal society to control women’s bodies, not only through the state, but also the doctors who would be in danger of sanctions if they carried out abortions, thereby disempowering women even further. Furthermore, the fact that women who seek abortion services have to gain consensus from their spouses, or in a teenage mother’s case, their parents (Article 9), demonstrates again how vulnerable

women are in making decisions on their own in relation to becoming a mother, and this has been widely criticised by feminist scholars in Taiwan (Hung, 2004; Kuo, 2009; Wu, 2007a).

Apart from all these controversies, the debate has come to another new level in the last decade as the fertility rate in Taiwan reached the world's lowest in 2010 (0.9 per woman in 2010 according to MoI (2016b)), furthermore, the media began to report the staggering anticipated number of babies being aborted (for example, in AppleDaily (2011), it reported one gynaecologist's claim that 500,000 babies were aborted yearly and this number was three times more than the number of new born babies in 2010. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the image of never-married mothers has at times been perceived as ignorant and irresponsible teenagers or women who were involved in promiscuity and having relentless abortions. This image, constructed by the media, has also become a source for the public to condemn those mothers who seek abortion. Cheng (2015) discussed the latest debate between Legislative Yuan's law makers¹⁵ in 2012 regarding this matter, and highlighted that several of them decided to insert a mandatory counselling service or a six-day mandatory waiting period before having the surgery in order to 'increase the fertility rate', as well as to avoid the abusive usage of induced abortion surgery. Cheng (ibid) further commented that these are not effective measures and actually it is women's economic capability and how friendly the society is that determine whether a woman decides to give birth to her child, instead of any mandatory procedures. Accordingly, Cheng (ibid) argues, policy makers should focus on improving the economic security of women as a whole rather than banning a woman's right towards making decision for herself.

From the above discussion, the implementation of the GHA and current public opinions on abortion might thus lead to two issues being raised in relation to never-married mothers: whether they have considered abortion and to what extent the GHA or the current environment had given them freedom or led to constraints when making choices that resulted in their deciding to give birth to their children.

¹⁵ They are equivalent to MPs in the UK.

2.3.2 NGOs' services for shelters and adoption

As mentioned in Subsection 2.2.3, housing resources from the state have been tremendously restricted for single-parent families, in particular to single mothers. Lee (2001) pointed out that for never-married single mothers it is even worse as they are at some point not eligible to public housing due to their marital status. To supplement the shortage of affordable housing, several NGOs are committed to provide residential housing for mothers in urgent need. Very often they will also cooperate with local governments do not have enough resources for managing house projects. According to Teenage Pregnancy Assistance Station [TPAS] (2014), there are eight NGOs who act as the main providers for temporary residential shelters for never-married mothers. For example, the Garden of Hope Foundation (GHF) has become one of the well-known providers amongst others. It has been an NGO which works with teenage prostitution and teenage pregnancy since 1988 (GHF, 2017) and their half-way homes are very much supplied to only never-married mothers, in particular teenagers. However, it is often criticised that these resources are designed specifically for teenagers while the adult never-married mothers' needs in terms of work are often neglected (Shih, 2010b). In general, the housing resources remain scarce and very often a resident will complain that the period of time they have been offered to stay is too short. For example, in the homes provided by GHF, a mother would only be allowed to move in from being 6-month of pregnant, and can remain as a resident no longer than two years. This has been an issue of not being enough for them to reequip themselves financially and physically.

Adopting a child or having a child adopted are considered very serious matters in a patrilineal society like Taiwan. It is very often that an infertile couple adopt a child to ensure the family name can be passed on (Fan, 2015). According to Chen (2013b), adoption could be dealt with privately without any household registration in Taiwan before 1985. It was not until 1993 that the adoption system was established on the basis of the Children Welfare Act (1993). After amendment in 2012, the latest Act of Protection of Children and Youth Welfare and Rights specified that every adoption should be carried out by government approved institutes except that between close relatives. As a result, the provision of adoption services from the state are often linked with NGOs. Just like having an abortion, adoption is an alternative for mothers who cannot afford to raise a child to terminate their motherhood. Studies have shown that in some cases, the mothers who gave

their children away for adoption bear similar stigma as if they had had an abortion – being seen as immoral and ignorant, even though they gave up their children due to their economic circumstances (Liao, 2014; Wang, 2003; Yang, 2015). NGOs who offered consulting services to never-married mothers are very often the ones who continue the assessment of adoption, being those who follow up the needs of these mothers and also assist them to consider what is the best interest for their children. According to Wang (2003), financial deficiency, lack of family’s support, and being unable to nurture the child when they are single, are three main reasons why these mothers might choose to give away their child for adoption. Moreover, it is also very likely that they were trying to avoid having abortions over to criticism from their family and hence, they opted for the choice of having their children adopted.

In Table 2.8, it can be seen that the total number of children being given for adoption is rising, and more children are adopted in Taiwan than before. Wang (2003) has pointed out, statistics from Ministry of Health and Welfare [MHW] which also demonstrated that most of the factors are related to economic problems, a lack of family’s perception/support, and whether mothers can nurture the child as a single parent (MHW, 2016b). Overall, the process of formal adoption assessment has been developing in the Taiwanese context. However, in Taiwan giving your child up for adoption flies in the face of being a good mother in that Confucian context and hence, many women who being pregnant out of wedlock are reluctant to do so.

Table 2.8 Total number of children given away for adoption since 2012

Year	Total number of children given for adoption	In Taiwan	International adoption
2012	273	80	193
2013	266	100	166
2014	347	155	192
2015	301	143	158

Sources: MHW (2016b).

2.3.3 The state's expectations regarding fathers' roles in relation to single-mothers' families

As discussed in section 2.2.1, it was established that before the revision in The Family Part of the Civil Code in 1996, the guardianship of children after parents' divorce was by default, given to the father, with the duties of the mother being seldom recognised after a divorce (see Figure 2.7). However, while the female labour force participation rate has been increasing and more mothers are becoming willing to be the children's guardians, the Family Part of the Civil Code was thus revised in accordance with the principle of gender equality, stating that two parents can share the duties for raising their children (Article 1055; 1055-1) (Kuo et al., 2009). According to Article 1055, divorced parents should reach a mutual agreement about the rights and duties of their children and if they fail to reach mutual agreement, the court makes a decision, in the best interests of the children, to assign a guardian and obtain provision from the other parent (Article 1055-1). Similarly, this can be applied to the situation of children born out of wedlock, where the biological mother and the child can claim the acknowledgement of the biological father with evidence, and decide the rights and duties regarding the child on a mutual basis (Article 1067; 1069-1).

Further, policy-makers would like to presume that divorced/separated/unmarried fathers remain as supporters of the single-mother family unit and thus implement compulsory regulations on biological fathers to carry out this support for single mothers. Such legislation was set in the Family Part of the Civil Code (1996) under the same articles mentioned, so that mothers can ask for support from fathers to share this obligation, however, unlike the Child Support Act (1991) in the UK, this is not enforced. The duty on fathers to support mothers is only established when both parents reach a mutual agreement, and the biological father does not necessarily have to provide financial support if the mother or the child does not claim their rights to it.

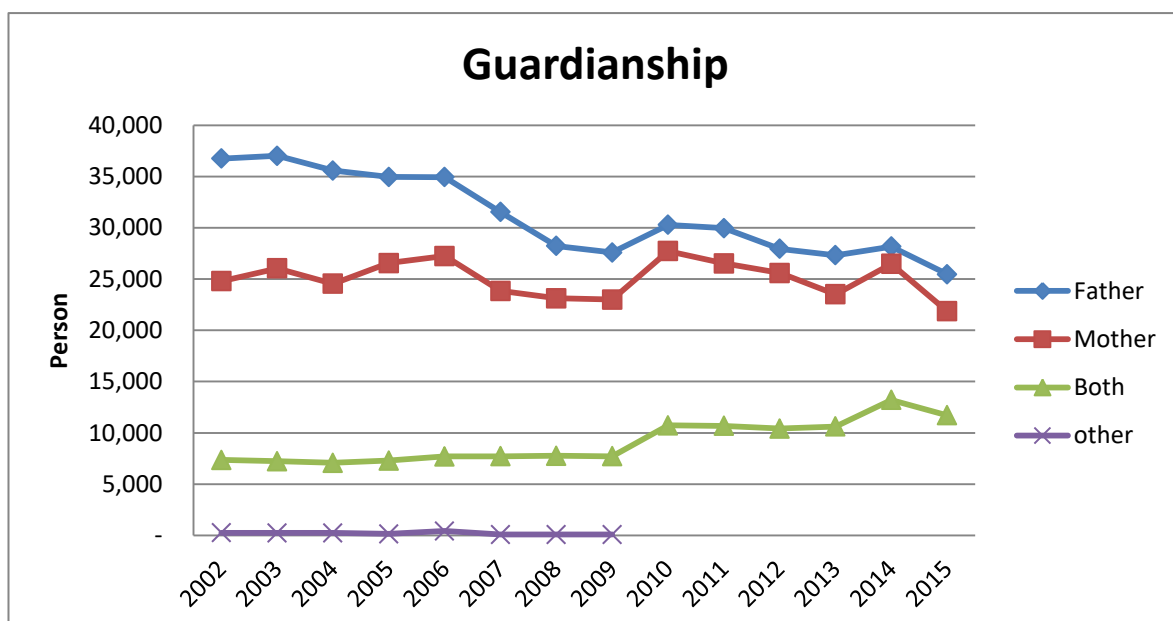


Figure 2.7 The arrangements for guardianship from 2002 to 2011

Sources: MoI (2016a).

2.4 Summary of this chapter

To conclude, a number of points have been elicited in this chapter. First of all, the number of single-parent families has been increasing for two decades but compared to other developed countries, the proportion of single-parent households is not so significant in Taiwan. Further, the proportion of this type of household made up of single fathers was relatively high and divorced single parents comprised the largest group among this type of unit, which was similar to the trend found in some of southern European countries. Moreover, it may be advanced that the gender differences observed regarding the financial situations and care arrangements of single parents tends to reflect the characteristics of a patriarchal society. Single mothers tend to face a worse situation than their single father counterparts in terms of economic capability and informal social support. Sometimes they are considered as needing economic support from the absent fathers which suggests that the state still unconsciously adopts the male-breadwinner model, even when the vast majority of Taiwanese women are working in the labour market and establishing a degree of independence from their husbands.

Other relevant evidence arose on observing the varieties of the provision of the social welfare to single parents in Taiwan. The design of provision was generally residual with most of the welfare being in the form of benefits, allowance or maintenance for families in

economic difficulties, and the amount on offer has been criticised as being too inadequate for living. From an examination drawing on Kilkey's (2000) workers/mothers framework, it emerged that the state apparently encourages single mothers to be workers rather than mothers. However, single parents are more likely to fall into poverty than the parents in married-couple families with dependent children and therefore can be categorised as poor workers as Kilkey (ibid) indicated for some southern European countries and an East Asian country, Japan. Single mothers in these countries have a high employment rate but tend to have a relatively high poverty rate, which indicate that the state might not offer sufficient support as they are forced to work in the labour market.

Finally, when attention is given to the group of never-married single mothers, two points can be summarised. Firstly, they have never formed the majority group among single mothers in Taiwan, possibly because the ideology of the traditional family has kept this group from increasing. However, this does not mean that never-married single mothers have not exhibited the features which their counterparts in most western countries encountered before the 1990s and the growth of never-married single motherhood might be gradually occurring. Secondly, policy designed especially for never-married single mothers might either bring serious stigma on them such as the GHA, or are generally few, for example, shelters for single mothers who are rejected by their own family, but these are only available for a limited time period and mostly for teenagers. In fact, on occasion, they were also excluded from some universal benefits, such as the procreation allowance managed by local governments. In brief, at times it may appear that the existence of this type of mother is beyond the government's imagination but can only be detected by the third sectors, and hence it is not surprising that they are sometimes invisible to formal social service providers.

The aim in this chapter was to understand the general situation of Taiwanese single mothers by presenting their socio-demographic features, economic status and care arrangements. In addition, the current policies which the state offers for them have been discussed and it has been highlighted that policy-makers are still under the influence of a strong conservative ideology which expects women to be in family units with their husbands. This set of mind is certainly unfavourable to the group of never-married single mothers.

In the following chapter, a theoretical and analytical framework for this current research is proposed that will serve to probe the issues faced by never-married single mothers in Taiwan.

Chapter 3 Theoretical Perspectives

Following on from the context chapters, which set out the backdrop against which women and single mothers live their lives in Taiwan, this chapter continues to discuss relevant literature, which could contribute to an understanding of never-married single mothers' choices, financial and social situations, and their possible coping strategies. Furthermore, the chapter also seeks to establish an exploratory theoretical framework based on gender perspectives in order to answer the research questions guiding this research. The chapter starts by examining the concept of individualisation so as to offer a lens through which to discuss the changes occurring in Taiwanese society (Section 3.1). This includes a discussion of its explanatory limitation with regard to women and women's lack of choices in the Confucian context. In Section 3.2, the forces pushing and pulling never-married single mothers to make their decisions are explored. In particular, the concept of 'gendered moral rationalities' and how it links to the moral dimension of these mothers' choices are considered. Section 3.3 goes on to highlight the economic effects of being a woman, or a single mother. The agency that these mothers may exert to manage their economically deprived situation is also considered towards the end of this section. Section 3.4 of the chapter moves on to focus on the phenomenon of the stigmatisation of never-married single mothers, which draws on an understanding of the potential impact that Confucian ideology has on society. Moreover, the coping strategies that never-married single mothers could utilise to deal with stigma are also under discussion. Finally, this chapter concludes by summarising the theoretical framework of this study.

3.1 Individualisation in the Confucian Context: Choices in Disguise

It is of note that Taiwanese society has been transforming since the development of industry in the 1970s. According to Directorate-general of Budget, Accounting and Statistics [DGBAS] (2014) and Tung (2006), the main household formation has become extended beyond the nuclear family of married couples to include other types of families with or without children. In fact, the married-couple family without a child, single-parent families and one-person households have demonstrated a pronounced increase since the 1990s. Moreover, the rate of female participation in the workforce has been gradually rising during the last three decades (DGBAS, 2016b) and in general, women's lives have moved away from being concerned with the traditional family, that is, their life stories are

no longer happening only inside the family. Therefore, the objective and the conceptual framework for this study includes the nature of social change and further, aims to explore the coping strategies which individuals are using to manage their lives during these changes.

In the field of social change, individualisation has been eagerly discussed among sociologists amidst the many issues relating to modernity. The arguments of Giddens (1992) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) provided an initial path to look at the change of personal life in Western society by pointing out the processes of individualisation and detraditionalisation that are happening, and the desire for ‘the life of one’s own’. While Giddens (1992) focused more on the process of individualisation with regards to the transformation of intimacy in relationships, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) defined individualisation more generally by saying it is a process of ‘dis-embedding without re-embedding’ (p. xxii). That is, the process of a society as a whole moving away from the traditional regimes, such as: class, gender or religion, but without knowing the consequences of the dis-attachment for people. Beck further stated it more clearly in an interview that, it is ‘a concept which describes a structural, sociological transformation of social institutions and the relationship of the individual to society’ (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p.202). In particular, Beck used it to understand ‘how people manage the change of their identity and consciousness, and also how their life situations and biographical patterns are changed’ (p. 202). Consequently, it could be appropriate to use this concept to build a framework for understanding how Taiwanese never-married single mothers are being affected by the changes occurring in society.

During the process of individualisation, the individuals are considered ‘the authors of his or her own life, the creator of an individual identity’ (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 23), and ‘the normal biography thus becomes the “elective biography”, “the reflexive biography” or the “do-it-yourself biography”’ (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 3). However, it is not necessarily a successful biography, because they also argued that ‘the “do-it-yourself biography” is always a “risky biography”’, and can swiftly change to a ‘breakdown biography’ (ibid). These authors therefore concluded that, ‘individualisation has a double face: “precarious freedom”’ (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. 16), and ‘agents of individualisation are also its victims’ (Beck et al., 2003, p.24). In this sense, the individuals living in a society that is transforming take their chances when they imagine and live their

lives by following their own will, particularly when they choose a way to live, but one not fitting within the traditional boundaries. In these situations, they also have to take the risks coming from their own choices.

From Bauman's point of view, individualisation is actually a much more difficult process, that 'consists in transforming human identity from a "given" into "task", and charging the actors with the responsibility for performing that task and for the consequence of their performance' (Bauman, 2002, p. xv). The choices and the consequences are all forced and hence, not down to the freedom of choice of the individual. Beck (2007), in his later argument, also agreed with Bauman and Giddens that individualisation in many cases is not a process that 'derives from a conscious choice or even a preference on the part of the individual', due to the choices on offer not being optional. What is essential, he stressed, is that modern institutions seem to be the major cause of this enforcement. Therefore, in this research it is assumed that never-married single mothers in Taiwan might be experiencing similar situations. That is, they are making decisions under the pressure of institutions, such as marriage, the labour market and the social welfare system.

3.1.1 Women and individualisation

In terms of women and the process of individualisation, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) pointed out that there is a 'general line of movement ...away from "living for others" towards "a bit of life of one's own"' (p. 55), due to women having greater freedom and opportunity in the dimensions of education, the labour market, as well as sexuality and relationships. As yet, however, this is not a complete process and is still ongoing. They asserted that "'The individualisation boost" ... opened up new scope for action and decision and new chances for women. But just as plainly it brought new uncertainties, conflicts and pressures' (p.55). Therefore, 'there's no longer any "model" that defines women's life perspectives - they are both more open and less protected than before' (p.55).

With respect to the above, some of the risks that women have to face emerge from the fact that the 'individualisation process was "incomplete", and trapped in a peculiar *intermediate* stage' (p.56). It can be shown that within the family, labour division remains unequal, and in the labour market the wage gap and occupational segregation still exist, thereby positioning women in a relatively disadvantaged position when compared to men. Many researchers, therefore, contend that the traditional forms of power, such as gender, still

have an effect on family ideas, women's choices of education and career paths (Adkins, 1999; Banks & Milestone, 2011; Dalley-Trim, 2012; Jackson, Ho, & Na, 2013). Consequently, it is of interest to study this, for rather than fully enjoying the benefits of individualisation, women may be forced to face the negative consequences of their decision making, particularly when the structural factors are obviously gendering and leading to risks in terms of their financial security or social condemnation.

3.1.2 Individualisation, gender relationships and single-mother families

Among the signs of individualisation, the gender relationship has been transformed in the Western context since the beginning of industrialisation. From Giddens' work in *The Transformation of Intimacy* (1992), it transpires that recent sociological understanding regarding intimate relationships within the family have altered considerably and hence, there is a far more complex and diverse debate than ever before. The notions he addressed, such as 'pure relationships' or 'confluent love', or by other scholars, such as Jamieson (1998) (i.e. the intimacy of a relationship), based on the reflexive self, seem to be the key underpinning principles for understanding modern relationships.

According to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995), in their book *The Normal Chaos of Love*, the process of individualisation is having its effect on men and women's life choices. 'Happiness' becomes one of the purposes that couples would like to achieve when they are 'running' their relationships; and love becomes the ultimate goal of life, when 'other social bonds seem too tenuous or unreliable' (p.24). This has result in a very unstable life pattern, when a man and a woman try to make their own biography into one, they are simultaneously longing for a 'life their own', thus creating 'the normal chaos of love'. The 'love', is central to the formation of a person's identity which thus impact particularly on the institution of marriage. This is reflected in the rise of divorce rate and re-partnering/remarriage, whereby through this process men and women expect that one day they can eventually 'find themselves'. However, in the age of individualisation, it is a big question as to whether they can really find themselves when many constantly fail in maintaining love in a relationship. Along with Giddens (1992) and Jamieson (1998), these authors pointed out that relationships are more diverse and changeable than before, owing to the impacts of one's own desires and seeking of satisfaction and the pursuing of love. It seems 'change' has become a new ethic for people to follow and the past model of

male-breadwinner/female-housewife family now increasingly appears to be an old-fashioned way to form a family.

They further emphasised that all these changes have happened owing to most women engaging in the process of individualisation. Once men and women are provided with equal opportunities in education and are both in the labour market, the latter attain more power within a relationship and a family than before. However, this initiates a long process of negotiation on issues including who does the housework and who takes care the child(ren), which they never had to engage in when their life biographies were more fixed. Whilst there would appear to be more options, it is likely that couples are trapped in a decision-making process with too many alternatives being available. In her study in relation to the mate selection of black college-educated single mothers in the US, Holland (2009) gave the reasons for their choice to remain single as: the desire to pursue their career; lack of desire to commit to one person; not being able to meet a man with the same desire to marry as well as having had experience of poor relationships, unequal distribution of responsibility and having a violent partner. These reasons show that the form of marriage expected by educated American women nowadays is a 'venture of satisfaction as well as companionship, rather than being solely a social function or an economic need' (p.177). This demonstrates the need for women to maintain their own biography, even though it might result in the failure of their marriage or relationship.

Since the relationship between men and women can be so unstable, a shift for women in the focus on the relationship with a partner to that with their children began to take hold. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) put it that, 'a child can become the focus of new hopes – it is the ultimate guarantee of permanence, providing an anchor for one's life. (p.73)'. This is what Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (ibid) pointed out as being the main reason for the rise in the numbers of single-mother families in the Western context, where the mothers seek their life target along with their unchanging love towards their children. In the case of never-married single mothers, Hertz (2006) also reported from her study that unmarried mothers in the US would like to give birth to a child without getting married to a man and many, would like to raise the children without any input from a man. Accordingly, a single-mother family been termed the 'post-familial family' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p.86), being viewed as a product of individualisation, actively searching for the meaning of their own lives. However, it should be noted that sometimes the responsibility

of childcare and childrearing still exist between the couple even though the relationship ends. Several family researchers pointed out that Giddens (1992) overlooked the importance of the child after divorce, when he posited that when ‘the pure relationship ends, there is, effectively, a clean break and people go their own way to find another relationship’ (p.18) (Morgan, 1996; Smart & Neale, 1999). Indeed, they noted that Beck and Beck-Gernsheim have noticed this gap and highlight that post-marital life might actually take the shape of a ‘separation marriage’, where interactions between two individuals are extended by connection with their child(ren). In this regard, life after divorce is still a composite of negotiation and compromise, just as with marriage, which requires further exploration in terms of family practices in daily lives. Very often, this might also happen in some of the never-married single mothers’ cases, when the mother expects the child’s father’s maintenance support.

3.1.3 Critics on Individualisation

It can be seen that the theory of individualisation, not only can help in understanding how a person develops her own life story when she is no longer obliged to conform to certain identity categories, such as class, for it can also uncover the risks she might have to encounter and what might have constrained her choices. However, it should be noted that this phenomenon may only be partially completed. That is, apart from gender, researchers have challenged proponents of this perspective, arguing that class distinctions still exist and that hence, traditional norms continue to have an influence on people’s lives even with the emergence of signs of individualisation.

According to Beck and Giddens, individualisation is an emerging phenomenon where people begin to be free from the social structures they were born under and hence, are able to live with a different biography. According to Beck (1992), in his book *The Risk Society*, the individual has become the basic ‘reproduction unit’ and ‘*class loses its sub-cultural basis and is no longer experienced*’ (p.98). However, this view has been widely criticised in terms of there being little empirical evidence in support of this and that which there is, has been confined to within the middle-class. Atkinson (2007), first of all, argued that this concept is too ambivalent and seems to move away from the perspective of the identity formation process being rooted in the social structure of society. He further pointed out that Beck failed to address the concept of class, such that its death can be clearly detected

in his work. Savage (2000), on the other hand, placed his contention on the claim of the 'universalisation of the risks' put forward by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), arguing that risks are actually varied amongst people as they will probably obtain higher/lower resources owing to their status when dealing with the risks. Consequently, an individual cannot assess the risks without locating themselves in a specific social situation. That is, it is feasible that the proponents of the theory of individualisation have overlooked the potential impact of class. Skeggs (2004) also addressed her concern that, individualisation might actually be used as a tool by these middle-class scholars as well as the state to set up institutions that ignore class differences in terms of power and resources, thereby placing the responsibility on individuals for not being able to handle the risks.

As mentioned earlier, gender could retain its power in terms of influencing the level of individualisation in both the private and public sectors. With regards to this, Adkins (1999) urged other feminist researchers to consider gender equality along with the concept of detraditionalisation, whereby questioning whether women could really be released from their existing gendered role as a housewife, and perhaps become economically independent in the labour market as a career woman. In a later article, furthermore, Adkins (2000) pointed out that, from the perspective of identity, female workers are more likely to be given a 'fixed' one, rather than being able to perform it with autonomy and agency. She therefore argued that, it is very likely the gendering process is still ongoing in a 'retraditionalisation' sense in the economic sphere, rather than a process of detraditionisation, as Beck and Giddens suggested. Following on this, Klett-Davis (2012) commented that individualisation is, in general, about valuing paid work over unpaid work, which means women have to be 'more like men, in continuous paid employment and without caring obligations' (p.29). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) have admitted that if there is no change of domestic work distribution between gender, women might have to face higher risk than men and therefore the process of individualisation will be incomplete.

In terms of the formation of intimate relationships and family, there are also some empirical findings that militate against the absolute process of individualisation. Through empirical research, Duncan and Smith (2006) found that gendered relationships are very much governed by local resources distribution, such as community economics and factors such as class, gender and race. Moreover, they pointed out that whilst people might indeed have fewer constraints from the traditional norms on how they are going to form their

relationships and families, they still have a tendency to treasure traditions as means of providing continuity and security. For example, it is very likely that unmarried couples or single mothers are looking for a traditional marriage and mothering in a context with more choices, rather than the pure relationship, as suggested by Giddens. Moreover, when considering ‘choices’ in terms of the form of relationship the fact that this can be constrained by economic circumstances needs to be taken into account. In sum, according to Duncan and Smith (2006), the power of traditional norms is still prevalent throughout society and individualisation is part of the existing structural process, thus representing nothing new, as has been previously claimed.

From the above, it can be seen that the concept of individualisation should be treated with caution. For it is a phenomenon that might only happen in certain privileged class categories and also, according to gender in terms of labour division in either the household or the labour market. Whilst it might offer freedom of choice in terms of choosing the form of relationship to engage in, this is constrained for many by the existing social structures and norms. As Brannen and Nilsen (2005) have warned about a ‘grand theory’, such as individualisation, it is crucial to bear in mind that empirical evidence based on local context is necessary during the research process. Following these criticisms from Western scholars, the next subsection considers at how individualisation can be interpreted as having emerged in the context of strong familist norms such as Taiwan.

3.1.4 Individualisation in a Confucian Context: women’s lives and expectations on relationship/marriage

After addressing the fundamental concepts of individualisation and its criticisms generated in the Western context, this subsection moves on to discuss the changes in women’s lives happening in Confucian countries, particularly in the face of the forces of modernity and industrialisation. Some Asian scholars, such as Chang and Song (2010) and Han and Shim (2010), have contended that individualisation in the East Asian context is much more rapidly changing, but more under the influence of the family and/or the community than in western contexts. More specifically, Chang and Song (2010) have argued that it is in the form of ‘institutionalised familism’ that East Asian countries develop signs of individualisation, rather than the ‘institutionalised individualism’ that Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) have described in the western context. Moreover, when

considering the characteristics of individualisation happening among women, not only the process is ongoing and not yet complete, the ideology of Confucianism is considered as the main tradition, which women have tried to escape from during the processes of individualisation.

As mentioned, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) pointed out that phenomenon of individualisation among women can be discerned in several perspectives: their improved education, the increase in female participation in the labour force (along with the gender wage gap and occupational segregation), acceptance of premarital sex. Applying these elements to the Taiwanese context, two aspects emerge as being of note. Firstly, in Taiwan, the spread of higher levels of education and a rapidly developing economy offered women more opportunities of working, both of which have been mentioned as probably being major causes of women's financial independence and the possibilities of having a family of their own (Cheng, 2009). As being pointed out by DGBAS (2014) for its report on household's changes, one of the significant trends with respect to family formation over the last 30 years has been the growth of single-parent families. This is often considered as the result of the gradual growth of the divorce rate. As discussed in Chapter 2, some legislation, especially the Family Part of Civil Code, was revised several times (1987, 1996, 1998, 2002) to ensure women's rights within and after the end of a marriage, and hence become a catalyst for marriage dissolution. It would certainly be too premature to conclude that women's individualisation has been completed in this Confucian society, as there is still an obvious wage gap and occupational segregation between genders, according to the reports regarding employment and salaries from the state (DGBAS, 2016a, 2016c). In Chapter 2, it has also been highlighted how single mothers have a greater likelihood of being relatively poor in comparison to men simply because they are women.

Secondly, another change that Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) mentioned as an indicator of individualisation, that is, in terms of sexuality and relationships are not so clearly identified in the Taiwanese context. Indeed, pre-marital sexual behaviour appears to be only growing gradually in its acceptability among Taiwanese couples, even amongst students for the last three decades (Chen, 2006; Yen et al., 2009). Nevertheless, as Figure 2.3 shows, the proportion of never-married single mothers has always been the smallest group of single mothers and has remained the smallest for two decades. In addition, the low cohabitation rates in the Taiwanese context are of note and according to Yang (2004,

2014), cohabiting couples aged 20-29 in Taiwan made up only 2.75% of all couples in 2000, while the proportion aged 20-34 in 2010 was 4%. These figures are similar to those in some Southern European countries, such as Spain and Italy, where familism is highly valued. Meanwhile, several studies have actually suggested that the intention of being married at some point in life still persists and the connection of childbirth with marriage, still exerts a strong influence (Gung, 2008; Yang, 2004). This, unintentionally, might fit in well with government promoted policies, such as the Family Planning Programme (from 1964 to 1990) and the Genetic Health Act (GHA) (1984) regulating birth control and hence, the resulting low levels of unmarried motherhood. Perhaps, as Chang and Song (2010) and Han and Shim (2010) have suggested, the institutions are indeed formed based on the ideologies. That is, the legislation is underpinned by a family ideology that asserts that marriage should happen first, followed by childbirth. Whilst it has been found in recent research that the new generation has been adopting more liberal thought than their elder counterparts due to their improved chances of receiving a good education and entry into the labour market, it can be seen that, to some extent, the traditional gendered ideology still has its impact on gendered attitudes, labour division within a family and marital/divorce expectations (Yang & Yen, 2011). Consequently, it seems reasonable to conclude that the signs of marriage deferral and the low fertility rate are actually mix effects of individualisation and traditional ideology in a rapidly-changing society. However, despite this change, it would appear that the values of marriage and family are still being heavily promoted in the Taiwanese context.

From the discussion above, we can understand how the process of individualisation is ongoing in contemporary Confucian society, and like their Western counterparts, there is also no sign that it has been completed among women given that they are still much more inferior to men in terms of power and economic capability in the Confucian context. Moreover, it appears that the display of traditional power may constitute some institution factors, such as legislation regarding marriage or childbirth, which Jackson et al. (2013) and Smart and Shipman (2004) claimed have had an impact upon freedom and choices during the process of individualisation. It is also highlighted by the scholars that the obligation in terms of coping with the outcomes that spring from taking their own risks, might be imposed on the women themselves by those welfare regimes which follow a Confucian legacy, as neo-liberalism has in Western countries (Dalley-Trim, 2012; Gazso & McDaniel, 2010). That is, the East Asian state might prefer to put more emphasis on

support of the complete family in ways that can excuse the state from assisting the individual when they indeed encounter the risk. As a result, if they are not able to, or not willing to follow the existing pathways, such as marriage, women in Confucian backgrounds still need to take on the whole responsibility for living their own lives. This, unsurprisingly, is not because of the assumptions of ‘more chances meaning more responsibility’, but rather owing to the responsibility arising from making the ‘wrong’ choice.

From the above, the concept of individualisation is considered to be suitable for looking at how Taiwanese never-married single mothers encounter difficulties, while they are positioned in this rapidly changing society. It can help examine the changes at the level of society, to see whether the pattern is similar to that occurring in the Western world. Moreover, given the process of individualisation in a contemporary Confucian context is considered not as significant as in its Western counterparts, what is of interest is why women still choose to become a mother without getting married when there are such stigmatised limitations in the cultural discursive background for them. The formation of this group is certainly different from the other main group of single mothers, i.e. those who have been through a divorce. The question arises as to whether they are individuals who have made their own choices to create their own biographies, in this case, without entering into the long established institution of marriage. Therefore, further explanations need to be sought. In the next section, the issues of moralities and freedom of choice are discussed when women are subjected to motherhood. This is in order to shed light on never-married single mothers’ choices against the backdrop of the social norms dictated by Confucian ideology.

3.2 Being individualised or being moral: Gendered Moral Rationalities

Having considered the impact of the emergence of individualisation in Taiwan and its limitation on women, the potential reasons for how and why these never-married mothers make their own choices that are different from those of others is scrutinised next in depth. In this section, the morality of choosing the status of relationships and motherhood are discussed further in order to understand these mothers’ choices in a society in which the freedom of choice is often constrained.

3.2.1 Gendered moral rationalities and never-married single motherhood

No matter how much these mothers strive, single motherhood is not taken to be as perfect as married motherhood, but rather, only what Silva (1996) terms, a ‘good enough’ motherhood. In their discussion of lone motherhood, Duncan and Edwards (1999) termed women’s understandings and demonstration regarding what they rationally deem to be good mother, socially and morally, as ‘gendered moral rationalities’. This is very much connected with lone mothers’ decision-making in relation to picking up paid work and reconciling this with their children’s needs. Three rationalities are thus generated, where mothers might identify themselves as a ‘primary mother’, a ‘primary worker’, or a ‘worker/mother integrated mother’, which can vary among mothers depending on the social contexts as well as across neighbourhoods, local labour markets and welfare state regimes. As Duncan and Edwards (2003) claimed, the purpose of gendered moral rationalities is to identify how an individual lone mother exercises her agency to interact with whatever the structure has placed on her. Accordingly, mothers make their decision to participate in the labour market or not, not just based on the economic rationale provided at the institutional level, but also in relation to their own ideals localised in their family, neighbourhood and networks. They explained that:

‘Structure and agency are linked by establishing how norms, values and beliefs guide specific behaviour in particular context. Social policy and the welfare state regimes, constitute one normative, which can be particularly constraining and enabling because it is backed up by the state control, and allocation of material resources, and legal sanction. But mothers’ social relationships and networks provide their own normatives, material resources, and sanctions.’ (p.20)

Accordingly, what has been lost from the theories of individualisation can be filled in by consideration of context, either at the macro level of the welfare regime, or micro one pertaining to the person’s family. It is very likely that the choices offered are constrained by these contextual factors, despite women being freer to make choices, where the options are clearly wider than before. In his later paper, focusing more on partnered women and the effect of class, Duncan (2005) clarified the concept of gendered moral rationalities further by comparing Catherine Hakim’s preference theory (1996, 2000, 2002) (which is more akin to Beck and Giddens’ classless individualisation) and John Goldthorpe’s

rational action theory, under which it is argued that women's decision-making between employment and childcare are not fixed to existing social class categories, but rather, pertains to a dynamic, historical and contextual process involving the construction of social identities. In line with the latter perspective, Duncan (2005) contends that gendered moral rationalities should not only be seen as a concept subject to the segregation of the middle or working classes, or just being related to resources, beliefs or norms governed by the structural reality. For, it involves both when women are developing their biography in terms of becoming a mother in the modern world.

It has been argued that the notion of gendered moral rationalities might also be overtaken by the theoretical framework of individualisation. Klett-Davies (2012), for instance, took a more individual stance and adopted the view of individualisation to examine how UK and Germany single mothers negotiate their identities as a mother and as a dependent. She emphasised that whilst there are effects from the mother's family members or neighbourhood, the mother is still the one who has to make the choice between paid work or childcare. Whilst some of them unwillingly become a full-time mother when they are not able to access flexible jobs or cannot earn enough money, others would like to be a 'professional mother' focusing full time on providing for their children. Regarding these mothers, according to this author, their decision to become so is reflexive and self-actualised. That is, even if they are welfare dependents, they deliberate about the circumstances they are in (e.g. have had a career and are confident that they will be able to re-enter the labour market later), they make active choices based on their interests or needs and perceive that they will manage somehow in the future. Despite some of the reasons for choosing to be full-time mothers not being 'socially acceptable', she highlighted that they are still mothers who are the 'critical agent who creates cultural meanings and moral values for herself and for others, which is evidence for late modernity, in which individuals are reflexive agents' (p.64). As a result, new narratives are formed and a 'personal' morality is forged.

In the case of never-married mothers, experiencing motherhood can be a thrilling event in their lives, but at the same time a transgression. As mentioned in Chapter 1, McKay and Rowlingson (1998) addressed the process of individuals choosing to be never-married mothers and pointed out that there are three main decisions to consider, whether: to take up the option of an abortion, to give their child(ren) for adoption, or whether to get married

after all. They also stressed that mothers face ‘a series of choices and constraints that affect their decisions and therefore the eventual outcome’ (p.47). Similarly, in the Taiwanese context, Cheng (2010) considered factors that pull these mothers away from having an abortion or getting married and push them into their current situations. It is posited that they weigh up the circumstances by themselves beforehand and choose the best route they can at the time, which is very much in line with the core ideas of the gendered moral rationalities perspective. In the next subsection, the moral considerations of whether to maintain a relationship with the child’s father are initially focused upon and are subsequently discussed together with the concept of gendered moral rationalities.

3.2.2 The ethical considerations in maintaining or relinquishing relationships

One of the issue which is important to consider with in relation to the ethics of relationships and marriage is how power is distributed between genders in the Taiwanese context, given it remains a patriarchal society. As mentioned in Chapter 1, women in this context are domestically-oriented and are in a submissive hierarchy based on age and gender (Lee, 2001). When this lens is adopted with respect to discussion of never-married mothers, the role and the attitude of the biological father could be essential when mothers are making their decisions. Connell (1987) was one of the first to mention in his book *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* the unbalanced nature of power between man and woman. When talking about power, he refers to ‘a balance of advantage or an inequality of resources’ (p.107) as well as ‘influence in decision making’ (p.123). Its distribution can be demonstrated ‘in a workplace, a household, or a larger institution (p.107)’. He posited that inequality of power, in some respects, results in the structure of cathexis (emotional attachment). Worell and Goodheart (2006) further argued that men have more power than women in nearly every aspect of life, with the latter having learned to limit themselves, which has resulted in them showing patterns of low self-esteem and lacking in confidence.

In the relationships in which Taiwanese never-married single mothers are involved, first of all, a greater degree of power imbalance within the decision-making of sexual behaviours and contraception could be present. Wang (2007b) reported in light of her research that in particular, this imbalance happened with teenage mothers, and when relationships develop where there is a large age difference, they can easily result in unexpected pregnancy.

Second, it is likely that one of the couple might not show loyalty within a relationship and have affairs, which result in extra-marital sex and pregnancy. This very often happens on the side of males, as Chang (1999) has argued, in that Taiwanese men are more likely to be tolerated for doing so than women, because in the past they were allowed to have ‘three wives and four concubines’, so long as they could afford them. In addition to these, it is already known that some of the unmarried mothers in Taiwan give birth, hoping that the relationship with the biological fathers of the children will be sustained, no matter whether the child’s father is married or not (Chen, 2003; Cheng, 2010). This demonstrates that the ‘cathexis’ in the relationship still has its influence in the decision-making regarding child birth.

Moreover, Chen (2003) also emphasised that the intention of pursuing marriage among never-married single mothers in Taiwan remains strong and they believed in their responsibility to offer a complete family to their illegitimate child(ren). In this regard, if they could not maintain their relationships, or they remained in a status of cohabitation, they become a group of mothers who are ‘forced to choose’ to be unmarried. Given the absence of the biological father, it turns them into powerless victims in the unequal gender relationship. In the institutional level, in Chapter 2, it is also addressed that the Family Part of Civil Code loosely covered that the child’s father has to share the financial responsibility of childrearing. It can be seen that certain normative values (i.e. having a complete family with the child’s father) or economic incentives (i.e. life being more stable when men supports) are continuing exert their influence from several aspects on this group of mothers when they are making decision about their future with their partners, which closely resembles with how gendered moral rationalities work when single mothers are choosing between work and care. It is therefore be crucial to explore the factors regarding the quality of the relationship with the child’s father to understand these mothers decision-making process of opting to become a never-married mother. That is, whether they would like to maintain these relationships for their children’s sake or do not wish to have the child’s father involved, become an important ethical consideration when deciding on the future arrangements.

3.2.3 The ethics of conflicting ideas on childbirth: having an abortion or adoption

Apart from the issues concerning the relationships formation in the Confucian context, another aspect of motherhood/mothering should be taken into account, that of when they are in the initial stage of becoming a mother, i.e. during their pregnancy. It was discussed in Chapter 2 that the GHA provided as a legal alternative for mothers to have an abortion, if the pregnancy was harmful to the health of the mother, despite its previous purpose of population control (Ku, 1990; Tsou, 2004). However, the abusive use of the law was revealed by the media and it became a controversial option as it was linked with teenage pregnancy and promiscuity (Ho, 2008; Kuo, 2009). Nowadays in Taiwan, having an abortion has generated a debate between feminist groups and conservative religious groups, as to whether mothers should or should not have the right of claiming their autonomy over their bodies in terms of if and when they procreate. According to Huang (2012), the attitudes of choosing to have an induced abortion were highly correlated with their gender role attitudes, whereby those with a high propensity for upholding the value of gender equality, were more inclined to make the decision to have an abortion. Lin (2008a), on the other hand, emphasised that from the perspective of Confucianism, in particular owing its principle of *Jen* (namely, benevolence) and the ethical relationship within the family, the moral relationship and the obligation of care between the fetus and the mother starts from the point of fertilisation, no matter whether it is an expected or an unexpected pregnancy. Therefore, it is often considered immoral when a woman contemplates having an abortion according to her own interest and preference. Lan (2007) also pointed out that apart from the mental pressure to feel guilty and ashamed, mothers considering having an abortion in the Confucian context would face spiritual as well as socio-cultural pressure when the religious beliefs and the family's opinions are taken into account. Therefore, having abortion or not has actually become a battle in relation to how different ideologies define moralities in relation to sexual behaviours, gendered roles within a family and how a mother conducts good motherhood/mothering (Lin, 2008a; Norris et al., 2011; Tseng, 2006).

For never-married single mothers, the reason for deciding to keep the children and raise them on their own is often very maternal-oriented. According to McKay and Rowlingson (1998) and Jarrett (1996), unmarried mothers are more likely to choose to become mothers because it is an inspiring event, when compared to the other option of just being

low-income workers throughout their lives. According to Linn (1991) and Hertz (2006), however, the age of the mother is an impetus for them to challenge the existing social norms, whereby some would like to become a mother before they found a 'Mr. Right', or before they cannot give birth anymore. That is to say, being a mother becomes 'an active choice under constraint' and is better than any other decision on offer at that moment. Although in the study from Bock (2000), this very often occurs amongst never-married mothers with better-off background and earning themselves a good living, claiming themselves are no different from the other mainstream mothers. Ellison (2003), on the other hand, argued that during the process of decision making regarding an unwed pregnancy, unmarried mothers' intentions to give their child(ren) away for adoption are strongly based on external authoritative knowledge sources such as social workers or families. In this respect, similar to the values in relation to relationship and marriage, the 'gendered moral rationalities' emerge in the same way, as choosing to be a mother out of wedlock is also a process of choosing to do the 'right and proper' thing at a certain point in time and in a particular context. However, the objective of the rationalities in this case does not concern labour market participation, but rather, whether to have an abortion or not as well as whether or not to get married.

It should be noted that the process of considering having an abortion or not encompasses several internal and external factors. After interviewing married mothers to find out how they made the decision with regards to having an abortion, Lan (2007) categorised four different modes of decision-making process. The first group are those relatively more active in choosing to have an abortion, with the reasons normally being due to their weak financial status and past bad nurturing experience. For the second group, who find themselves accidentally pregnant with their first child, they will tend to keep it. Regarding the third group, they are hesitant to have an abortion, being affected by their own religious beliefs and are connected with the child when it is just a foetus. In relation to the last group, it is the gender of the baby and the husband's attitudes that force them to give birth or not to the child. As for unmarried women, according to Wang (2009), the categories varied from: if there will be no chance of getting married, then it is better to have an abortion; the woman has the dominant power for the decision making; and some concerns towards the child's health. In this regards, for women who considered having an abortion, irrespective of their marital status, finance (from herself or from others), the health and gender of the children, and the important others' opinions are crucial factors. According to Wang (2012),

the power of gender outdoes all of these factors through the influence of culture and societal structure, thereby subordinating women's position in the decision making process. If they are not able to afford the child and the child's father or their family cannot or will not help, many do not consider it the best option for the new born child is to be raised by themselves. It can be seen that, nowadays, in the Confucian context, both family and the state, very often, serve up more constraints than freedoms in relation to giving birth to a child. The formation of their agentic choices, or whether there are any agentic choices emerging, become an interesting question.

3.2.4 The ultimate ethic: Motherhood

Following on from the discussion above, it is also important to consider the original scenarios which the concept of gendered moral rationalities based upon. In this subsection aims to discuss the confliction when Taiwanese never-married mothers have to choose between full-time motherhood and employment and the possible rationale behind these decisions. The notions of motherhood and mothering have been discussed as an essential part of women's lives, but rejected by feminists as they assert that it is 'not *natural* for women, but that they are historically, culturally and socially constructed' (Silva, 1996, p. 1). From Hays' (1996) research in the US, motherhood has been revealed as a socially-constructed concept, which strongly requires mothers to conduct a child-centred 'intensive mothering', no matter whether they are employed full-time or not. In the Taiwanese case, Confucian ideology could exert its influence on women and their expectations of motherhood in general. Pan (2005) indicated that the distinctions between women in Taiwan and most Western countries are significant when attributing the responsibility for motherhood practices. Taiwanese women are more often found to be self-oriented and consider the care burden as the individual woman's or their family's responsibility rather than that of the state or society. As a result, motherhood remains focused on women and their families, with men and the state have less responsibility with respect to carrying the burden. Chuang (1998), on the other hand, reported that modern Taiwanese women emphasise the importance of intensive motherhood under the instructions of professional nurturing and education information, and consider to be 'good' mothering, if they have taken full responsibility for their children in the role of the main child carer. However, they also admitted that this kind of motherhood is very challenging when they are involved in the labour market. In fact, according to Wu (2007b), she

highlighted the importance of Confucianism in defining the requirements of good motherhood in the industrialised period, where mothers are expected to ‘prioritise your family, take good care of your children, and then the residual energy would be allowed to be spent on other activities such as paid work’. It is very common for women to put motherhood before employment. However, she also pointed out that the consciousness of motherhood in Taiwan changed after the country entered the post-industrialisation era. For instance, Lui (2000) discerned a change in children’s expectations on motherhood, whereby this has started to include their role as a possible breadwinner. Also, Chiu (2009) found out that career women with high levels of education could organise their resources and manage the conflict between work and care, and enjoy motherhood positively as a process of life, rather than as a total sacrifice to the family. As is mentioned in Chapter 2, several policy measures which encourage women to balance work and care have launched in the 2000s. It is therefore gradually expected by the state that Taiwanese women should be able to manage both work and childcare well at the same time.

In terms of never-married single mothers, according to Cheng, et al. (2008), most Taiwanese unwed mothers have to postpone their time for returning to the labour market when they are the only or main carer available for their children. As claimed by Pan (2005), culturally, biological mothers are expected to take full responsibility for raising their child(ren). However, this goes against the ‘work ethic’ promoted in a Confucian welfare regime context in that they are supposed to work diligently so as to be able to afford their own lives. From the research conducted by Chen (2002a) in relation to the struggles single mothers encountered, when they conduct their daily mothering practice due to the outcomes of being rejected in the labour market, they are often condemned as being ‘too lazy’ and criticised for relying heavily on welfare benefits from the state for their living. For those mothers who are already in poverty, it is even more difficult for them to escape from this predicament without their family’s support. Regarding the decision-making process, it is of note that ‘gendered moral rationalities’ are used by these mothers to make the best decision according to the values they believe in. As Hays (1996) asserted, ‘people select among the cultural logics at their disposal in order to develop a correspondence between what they believe and what they actually do’, and they just do the “ideological work” to maintain their sanity. However, as the decision is going to violate one value or the other (i.e. being a full-time mother who personally takes care of their children, or a diligent working mother who takes full responsibility so as to afford her life), they cannot

escape from being condemned and stigmatised. This particularly happening when the sign of individualisation has emerged in a rapidly-changing society, such as Taiwan, but traditional social norms have not disappeared entirely, and stigmatisation is still rife.

From the discussion above, the possible framework from gendered moral rationalities may be helpful for examining the reasons why women end up in the position of being never-married single mothers has been outlined. It can be seen that their decision to be a never-married mother was not entirely individualised, even though on the surface it would appear to be and they are often being asked to take the responsibility for the risks following the event. In fact, several structural factors, including gender and existing social norms in the Confucian context play crucial roles during the process of decision-making. In the next section, the economic impact of the fact that they are women is considered. That is, in the following section, economic deprivation occurring in women's lives is investigated, and the concept of agency is discussed in order to understand the strategies, which these mothers might adopt for managing their daily lives.

3.3 Poverty: The economic consequence of never-married single motherhood

From the discussion of women's individualisation, it is clear that economic independence is a key aspect. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) contended that individualisation is not complete among women when they are at a structural disadvantage in terms of fully developing their freedom of choices. It is indeed a challenge when a single mother has to raise her children up all on her own, while having to also negotiate her life between employment and childcare. In a Confucian context, being a woman is not helpful in terms of avoiding economic risk given the predominant patriarchal norms, whereby from the level of the state to the family, the resources are mainly controlled by men. Accordingly, it is essential to examine the consequences of becoming a never-married single mother from an economic perspective. The coming subsections consider this issue from a structural perspective, including such issues as welfare regimes, the labour market and the family from a gendered perspective as well as investigating the effects of class on this cohort. The final subsections discuss the issue of agency being exerted by the poor, to determine whether there can be proactive behaviour or even individualisation despite resources being constrained.

3.3.1 Gender, poverty and single mothers

Many researchers started out from the voiced criticisms of Esping-Andersen's work and developed the question concerning what are the rights that women deserve in welfare states. Esping-Andersen (1990) categorised welfare states into three models in *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, according to three indices: decommodification, stratification and state-market relations. However, Lewis (1992) criticised this model as lacking gender perspectives, and that it overlooked the value of unpaid work as well as women's disadvantages in terms of social entitlement. By using the model of male-breadwinner, she pointed out that Britain and Ireland are members of the group of 'strong' male breadwinner states, whereas France and Sweden are 'modified' and fall into the 'dual-breadwinner model'. These differences demonstrate women's participation in the labour market as well as the provision of childcare services and maternity leave. They also highlight the distribution of social insecurity between men and women, whereby women's situation varies according to the different kinds of welfare states. Orloff (1993) and O'Connor (1993) also extended the original categories of Esping-Andersen to take gender and state-market-family relationships into consideration. They emphasised the importance of women's access to paid work and their capacity to form and maintain an autonomous household. Sainsbury (1994) further argued that the typologies of the countries by Esping-Andersen might be changed after considering gender.

In East Asian welfare regimes, gender was an issue ignored by the state. Goodman and Peng (1996) indicated that these countries emphasise the familial idea of solidarity, patriarchal authority, and strict gender-based role separation and female subordination. This has seen women spending more time on unpaid work and gaining less from paid work when compared with men. Moreover, when women give up their career for marriage and childbirth, around half of them appear not to re-enter the labour market because of caring work. One outcome of this, according to scholars of gender policy (Lewis, 1992, 2001, 2006; Sainsbury, 1994), is that women are more likely to fall into poverty in their old age, mainly because the designs of national pension schemes remain gender-biased. In the case of Taiwan, it has been shown by Chen and Chung (2008) that women are more disadvantaged than men in claiming pensions due to their fragmented and unstable periods spent in the labour market.

The causes of poverty among women is another widely-discussed topic in feminist studies in relation to the structural background or welfare regimes (Daly, 2003; Pascall, 1997). Glendinning and Millar (1992) pointed out that the types of jobs that women obtain tend to be 'secondary', and often offer less payment than those of men, due to the prior assumption of their being wives or mothers in families. In this respect, women are more disadvantaged regarding the entitlements from social security systems in relation to the labour market, where men's endeavours in the labour form the centre of policy design. Furthermore, due to assumptions regarding women's economic dependency on men, women's poverty is sometimes invisible. In other words, it is a point easily neglected that men and women are positioned unequally in terms of access to the resources within the household. Glendinning and Millar (1992) therefore argued that, 'any valid definition of poverty must focus on the capacity of individual people to support themselves without relying upon others' (p.9), and women are more vulnerable in this sense than men, which further aggravates their poverty. Moreover, they asserted that this division of work can influence the ideology of who deserves the support provided by welfare services or under assistance systems. That is, 'men are "undeserving" if they do not provide (if they are unemployed); women, too, if they fail to find a male provider (if they are unmarried or divorced) or if they do not manage properly and fall into debt' (Millar & Glendinning, 1989, p. 372).

With regards to the poverty among single mothers, Millar (1992) pointed out their circumstances of having no stable economic resources, in particular, in the case of married women and they also lack the time to maintain a normal living standard. Moreover, she asserted that 'it is precisely because lone mothers are women that they have a very high risk of poverty' (p.149). This is mainly due to the reason that women do not access the labour market for economic resources with the same degree of eligibility or in a way that is as sustained as men can, in addition to the prevailing expectation of women being economically dependent on men (Glendinning & Millar, 1992).

From Chapter 2, it can also be seen that Taiwanese single mothers' struggle to earn enough for their household in the labour market and that the welfare benefits provided to them are often residual and family-centered. Moreover, the social support and the right of coresidence with the original family are both proved to be limited, especially to single mothers in comparison to single father. As Lee (2001) asserted, single mothers in Taiwan

follow a 'Worker-mother-family-outsider' model (p.104), whereby they simultaneously will have to be a worker and a mother, whilst also most likely being excluded from the resources of their family owing to the preference towards males in the patriarchal society. It is therefore never easy when a single mother would like to be economically independent through participating in the labour market, or being able to rely on generous their family or state benefits as a full-time mother in an East Asian welfare regime such as Taiwan.

What has been discussed is the economic imbalance between men and women, which has resulted in the feminisation of poverty. However, some scholars have emphasised the importance of the influence of other factors leading to poverty amongst women, in particular, being forced into single motherhood. Rowlingson and McKay (2002) included the impact of class in their understanding of single motherhood and poverty. They claimed, 'it is not simply the case that lone mothers are poor because they are women. It is also the case that poor women became lone mothers and remain poor or became even poorer' (p.62). They also posited that middle class single mothers will experience different difficulties, but will receive higher levels of support in terms of housing, savings, maintenance, and even experiences in the labour market, when compared with working class single mothers. In their later research, Rowlingson and McKay (2005) used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to demonstrate that British women from the working class are more likely to become single mothers than those from the middle class. Moreover, the experience of being a single mother is diverse, and these can vary according to their socio-economic background. That is, socioeconomic status not only affects the type of a woman's family structure, but also the 'lived' experience of that type of family, from the resources they can withdraw from their family and friends, to the types of difficulties they have to face. This has also been echoed by the critics on individualisation in relation to the classless life biography, whereby they argue there is great variation across the different classes. Consequently, according to Duncan (2005), these matters should be examined carefully, in a cultural and historical manner.

3.3.2 Relational status and economic incentives

Apart from depending on the labour market and/or on state benefits, the mothers might also rely on the child's father or the other men for financial support. In Chapter 2, it has been in discussed how an illegitimate child has to be 'acknowledged' by the biological

father for the mother to be able to claim the right to ask for childrearing fees from him towards raising the child (Civil Code of Family Part Article 1067). In Subsection 3.2.2, the ethical considerations of maintaining a relationship with the child's father also demonstrated the cultural aspect of relational attachment, whereby the Taiwanese never-married mothers are inclined to want to maintain the 'complete family' when finding out they are pregnant. However, owing to the breaking down of the relationship and the lack of willingness on the part of the child's father, it is often not easy to claim any child maintenance from him when the couple have not got married and hence, the ensuing economic deprivation. Their status whether to stay in the relationship, therefore, is not just a moral consideration, for often it is also an economic one.

Several researchers also explain how the financial difficulties after the dissolution of a relationship trigger the incentive to find a new partner (Dewilde & Uunk, 2008; Gibson-Davis et al., 2005; Jansen et al., 2009). According to Wong et al. (2004), some of the Asian single mothers seek to get married so they can rebuild another family by having someone who can take care of their children, and they can 'clean up their name' again. Despite this, it should be noted that two trends coexist regarding remarriage in the modern East Asian context. First, according to Kuo (2012), it is often considered not honourable for a single mother to remarry in the traditional marriage costume. Therefore, it is very likely that single mothers would avoid remarriage to protect their reputation, even though their economic capacity is limited. Secondly, the unequal status between men and women within marriage in modern Taiwanese society might encourage these single mothers, especially higher-educated ones, to escape from this institution. Lee (2011) found in her research that Taiwanese single mothers have gradually been reclaiming their autonomy and freedom, in particular with the decisions in relation to financial arrangements, after they become 'single' again. It would thus appear from her research that some mothers taken into consideration the possibility of permanent single motherhood as their future life path.

In the case of never-married single mothers, as they have not experienced married life at all, it is highly likely that their marital expectations will remain high, as Gung (2008) had found that mothers who got pregnant before marriage would still expect to marry the child's father. However, compared with women who have not had an unmarried childbearing experience, several studies have indicated that their counterparts have less opportunity to enter marriage, and are more likely to cohabit (e.g. with a less-educated or

older partner) (Danial et al., 1999; Pai, 2013; Qian et al., 2005). Moreover, it was also discovered by Rowlingson and McKay (2005) that single mothers from better-off backgrounds, especially those with the ownership of a house or a job, are more likely to have a (new) partner. These women are thus quite disadvantaged in the marriage market when they are with a child. However, similar to Holland (2009), Bzostek et al. (2012) having pointed out that, some of these mothers will remain single until they find a 'well matched' partner. According to Griffiths (2017), this is often the main reason that never-married single mothers in the UK remain in the status as welfare dependents, which shows that they have begun to deliberate upon the cost and benefit of re/partnering. However, it should not be ignored that this is a phenomenon reported mainly in the Western world, such as in the US (Kantrowitz & Wingert, 2001; Trimberger, 2006). It is thus questionable to claim that mothers in the East Asian context have been coming to the same conclusion.

From the discussions of these two sections, it can be seen that never-married single mothers are very likely to encounter financial difficulties owing to the structural and institutional challenges regarding gendered and class difference. Furthermore, their 'choice' of becoming a single mother places them in a disadvantaged position, for many are seen as being immoral situation, which hinders their chances of re/partnering in the future. In the next section, the strategies of how these mothers might exercise their agency, and manage their financial difficulties are discussed.

3.3.3 Agency and economic management strategies

The notion of agency has long been discussed as one of the solutions for changing the plight of poor individuals. Lister (2004) defined it as a concept which considers individuals to be 'autonomous, purposive and creative actors, capable of a degree of choices' (p.125). Whilst it could be used to describe how the poor are capable of facing their daily difficulties by relying on their own strength or resources, it sometimes tends to be the reason why the poor are blamed for being poor-owing to their own choices. Consequently, from Lister's (2004) point of view, the interaction between agency and structure is important. She asserted that it is relevant to individualisation, in respect to which Beck and Beck-Gernsheim addressed an individual's own choices and how wider society's constraints can impact upon them. In this research, the effects of culture and

structure that Lister (2004) emphasised will be considered when exploring agency. Further, I intend to draw on her framework of four categories of agency, in order to understand how never-married mothers in poverty manage themselves through their lives.

Lister (2004) firstly adopted Kabeer (2000) ideas of 'strategic agency' and Leisering and Leibfried (1999) notions of 'everyday agency' as one dimension and the political/citizenship agency as a second, to show how from these elements emerge strategies which poor individuals use to manage their lives. Firstly, the personal-everyday quadrant refers to how the individuals operationalise their resources when encountering their daily difficulties and at this point in time, there is much concern over the coping strategies the actors take in their everyday lives. These encompass their capability to adapt their personal, social, material and cultural resources, as well as the time to deal with stressful circumstances. Also, it is of note that the resources are very often constrained within different macroeconomic situations, social contexts, cultural and ideological expectations (Rakodi & Lloyd-Jones, 2002). Moreover, the channels for deploying resources here, which could be termed social networks, are essential when looking at how people receive support and what kinds of support they receive (Ghate & Hazel, 2002). Regarding which, Edin and Lein (1997) highlighted that single mothers who desperately want to manage financially might obtain financial contributions from their family members and friends, their new boyfriends or the child's father and/or NGO groups, so as to supplement what income they have. Likewise, according to Canton (2015), lone mothers' supportive and capable networks indeed assist them in dealing with times of austerity.

In terms of the second quadrant of everyday-political dimensions, this refers to a more negative response that poor groups of people demonstrate in their encounters with others in areas where certain values are imputed on them. This is a behaviour that Scott (1985) termed 'everyday resistance', which is utilised as 'the ordinary weapons of a relatively powerless group' (1985:29) so that they can show their autonomy and dignity through them. Whilst it can be taken up as weapon to survive, (e.g. social security fraud in the welfare system), it can also be used at the political level to 'get (back) at' those with power over them, even if they are not able to directly and effectively, compete with the powerful.

Thirdly, the quadrant of personal-strategic pertains to the capability of adopting strategies through which they might 'get out' of the poverty, the most common ways being through

education and employment. It is widely contended that these strategies are influenced by structural and cultural backgrounds (Leisering & Leibfried, 1999; Leisering & Walker, 1998), which can ‘assist or obstruct the exercise of that agency’ (Lister, 2004, p. 145). For instance, on the one hand, single mothers who have paid work might tend to exercise their strategic agency through means that ensure that their children can obtain better education in the future. Meanwhile, there are pressures from the authorities, such as those to be economically independent and to take responsibility for their children’s good education, which highlights the effects happening at the structural level. However, the norms of being a good mother can also lead to the choice of full-time childcare rather than taking up paid work, for those single mothers who hold this perspective.

The last quadrant offers a lens to explore how agency is exercised from the political/citizenship-strategic dimension. It is debatable whether the poor can participate actively in political spheres and ‘get organized’ (Lister, 2004, p.149), for as Lister (2004) argued, the categorical identity of the poor is not easily established owing to the shame associated with being one of ‘the poor’. As a result, it is difficult to develop political agency so as to be confident in participating in political life. Moreover, the crucial reason behind an apparent reluctance to participate is materially oriented, whereby lack of money, lack of transportation and safety, depressing environments and being stuck at home can all be disincentives. Nevertheless, this scholar stressed the possibility of ‘collective self-help’ occurring in certain communities or societies which extend social resources from the personal-everyday level and present opportunities for sharing them with the wider society.

Overall, when inserting gender into the discussion of poverty, the issues encompass not only women’s capability to earn money in the labour market, but also their entitlement to rights in the welfare state as well as their justification for consumption within the family. As Millar and Glendinning (1989) have stressed, this approach leads to broader debates regarding women’s poverty in both private and public spheres. Further, we might need to bear in mind that the effects of class might lead single mothers to encounter diverse experiences when managing their lives. Also, the economic incentives of finding a partner for never-married mothers might alter their decision to re/partner. Finally, the strategies regarding how to exercise agency in four dimensions illuminates how individuals in poverty act to manage their lives or pursue their rights under certain structural or cultural conditions. It is intended that through applying these frames the economic situations of

never-married single mothers in Taiwan can be explored and in particular, help to explain their disadvantaged position as female heads of household and as secondary workers in the labour market. Their application will also clarify the dynamic support and resources they might obtain during the gendered process of moving into or out of poverty.

In this section, the economic consequences of being a never-married mother and how they might cope with their everyday life through their agency have been covered, but the moral dimension of their decision-making has not yet been considered in depth. Consequently, in the following sections, the aspects of stigma that might be generated in the Confucian context when women become never-married single mothers are explored.

3.4 Stigma: the social-relational consequence of never-married single motherhood in the Confucian context

It has been emphasised in the introduction how never-married single mothers in Taiwan are subjected to a severe amount of social pressure, given they are considered to have violated some pervading social norms, especially in relation to being ‘good’ women, mothers and daughters-in-law. They are often seen as a group of mothers who have made their own choice and have created their own life stories, but instead of really being individualised (i.e. eligible to choose ‘the life of one’s own’ preference), social condemnation is never too far away. In a rapidly-changing, but yet still traditional society, such as Taiwan, it is inevitably crucial to look at how the existing social norms exert their influence on the process of making life choices. Accordingly, the following subsections consider the concepts of stigma and discuss the possible management strategies when people encounter any stigmatised situations in their lives.

3.4.1 Stigma: the origin and its extension

According to Goffman (1963), stigma is ‘an attribute which is deeply discrediting, but it should be seen that a language of relationships, not attribute, is really needed.’ (p.5) He highlighted the importance of the possibility of the features of the stigmatised person being known immediately or whether they can conceal the factors which can make them stigmatised, for this can generate a unusual kind of interaction between the person and the ‘normals’, i.e. those people who have not been through a similar experience. By being able to conceal the discreditable attributes, the person can possibly act as normal and does not

have to deal with the pressure from responses regarding stigma. When they cover over this negative feature, they can be treated more equally by other ‘normals’, without being judged.

From another perspective, Stafford and Scott (1986) stressed the importance of norms by defining stigma as ‘a characteristic of persons that is contrary to a norm of a social unit’ (pp. 80-82). This means that what a person holds or becomes, if not accepted by the social norms, will generate stigma and this will then be used to label the person. Furthermore, according to Crocker et al. (1998), stigma happens when a person has attributes or characteristics which ‘convey a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context’ (p.505). Consequently, it seems that a person with a stigmatised attribute in one social setting, is not necessarily treated the same in another social context. The reality of stigma can rise from perceptions and be derived from the interactions between individuals. In this sense, it is more important to see it as a socially-constructed concept, rather than focusing on a specific person with a specific fact, for the generation of the stigma. The concept of stigma is a good tool to understand the subjects of this research in terms of detecting what they have been through during the process of pregnancy and single motherhood, in the context of a society that traditionally places a high value on the family.

More recently, Herek (2009) drew up a framework from Goffman’s earlier concept to address the idea of sexual stigma. He first defined stigma as ‘referring to the negative regard and inferior status that society collectively accords to people who possess a particular characteristic or belong to a particular group or category’ (p.906). Subsequently, he divided stigma into three categories: 1) enacted, which refers to individual behaviours that express stigma; 2) felt, which concerns individual awareness about stigma and its consequences, and 3) internalised, which pertains to an individual’s acceptance of the stigma’s legitimacy. Regarding this last aspect of stigma, the stigmatised individual might be imputed with it, but does not agree or accept that they deserve to experience. These three concepts regarding forms of stigma can help to understand the mechanism through which stigmatised individuals may perceive the phenomenon.

3.4.2 Stigma management strategies

Another important issue in relation to the concept of stigma is how individuals try to deal with it and reduce it if possible. According to Goffman’s typology, there are three types of

stigma: those relating to the body, blemishes of character, and tribal stigmas. The second and third are considered concealable, thus being more related to the challenge of controlling information about themselves by those who are the subject of the stigma. Otherwise, they will have to deal with the conflicts or tensions when the stigmatised factors are uncovered. Regarding the management of stigma, Jarrett (1996) adopted Goffman's idea and pointed out two strategies that low-income African American single mothers might use: actions taken collectively and those taken individually. Collectively, they might create subcultures or political action groups, which advocate positively regarding their deviance, through which they seek to challenge existing norms. Individually, they tend to conceal the information, either by concealing their deviant fact, if this feature is invisible, or alternatively, they might develop skills in order to interact with the ignorant 'normals'. According to Shih (2004), regarding empowerment, there are two approaches that the stigmatised person might adopt for dealing with stigma: one is coping it to prevent negative consequences, which is highly likely to be energy sapping and can result in harm. Alternatively, she can become empowered by confronting the stigma so as to proactively diminish its effects. Cockrill and Nack (2013) further asserted that there are three strategies that women try to use to manage the stigma relating to their having had an abortion: the first one is intrapersonal, that is, managing the damaged self, whilst the second and third concern maintaining a good reputation and managing a damaged reputation interpersonally. These strategies are believed to prevent far more stigmatised circumstances, and protect individuals' identity. It is hoped by some researchers that these can help to reduce stigma and provide the individuals concerned with care from relatives or official services (Cockrill & Nack, 2013; Norris et al., 2011).

3.4.3 Stigma, Confucianism and women

As mentioned earlier, stigma is a socially-constructed idea and its origins can vary according to social contexts. As social contexts vary, the social norms established from them can be taken as one of the causes of stigma (Hertog & Iwasawa, 2011). That is to say, any behaviour and way of thinking that challenge the general belief of what is good or bad in society can generate stigma. For example, according to Ip (2011), the concept of happiness has been shifting due to the transformation of society. In the past, the essence of happiness encompassed the ideas generated from the intelligentsia-official class and ordinary folks divide. Specifically, whilst happiness was considered to be more related to

filial piety, family bliss, personal moral integrity, morality-constrained desires, satisfaction and higher education among the ruling or intellectual people, material success, found through indicators, such as having a high income and a decent job were its drivers among the common people. Owing to the impact of modernity and industrialisation, along with the development of national citizenship in democratic countries, the new conceptual setting of happiness has drawn in the notion of national welfare or security. In this sense, any group of people who have characteristics or attributes that are against these contemporary principles of happiness could be taken as not being happy, in the way that ordinary people should aim be.

In Confucian countries, due to the effects of strong familism, which considers the male as being the rightful head of the household, those families without two parents and female-headed ones might well be taken to be abnormal and consequently, sometimes suffer from discrimination brought about by widely held stigmatising views (Kung et al., 2004; Wong et al., 2004; Iwata, 2007). In other words, the stigma imposed on them concerns the fact that they cannot follow the requirements laid out for being good women or good mothers in a good family. As mentioned by Mollborn (2009), stigma can further affect them regarding the support they might attain from their social network, such as their family or friends¹⁶. Additionally, this negativity can be exerted from institutional actors, such as the state's policymakers. Brandwein et al. (1974) claimed the single-mother family is considered as being deviant for two reasons: the abnormality of it being a one-adult family and at the same time, a female-headed household. The stigmatisation thus comes with 'the labelling of these families as deviant' (p.496), and the negative social attitudes leads to lack of social support coming forward from others. In such circumstances, it seems that the stigma has been constructed from the basic beliefs held by others in society about the normality of the family and motherhood being normal for women. When women act in contradiction to the general social consciousness, they are likely to be treated differently, or sometimes, worse, with negative social attitudes being expressed by others. These authors suggested that this might influence the ability of single mothers to manage their

¹⁶ Studies conducted in another familial context, namely Mexico, exemplify a similar, yet slightly different response. According to Zeiders et al. (2015), the higher level of familism that never-married mother's parents hold, the more inclined they are to support their unmarried daughter. Here familism in the Mexican context means they are more responsive to the family's needs and as a result, will be more inclined to exercise parenting behaviours that 'offer support and increase family connectedness' (p.625).

lives and fulfil the family function because they could face sex-related discrimination (i.e. being discriminated against because they are women), discrimination from social assumptions regarding the normalcy of the two-parent family unit, as well as the negative experience of having very little social support.

3.4.4 Stigma and never-married single mothers

Never-married single mothers can suffer extra prejudice from the public through being perceived as having immoral sexual attitudes in addition to them being unsuitable mothers as well as being powerless heads of household. According to Nack (2002), this resonates with ‘tribal stigma’, which Goffman (1963) claimed can ‘contaminate all members of a family’ (p,14). She further developed the concept that women’s self and identity regarding their sexuality relies deeply on salient social norms. As a result, there is one ‘tribe’ (group) of women, who are morally acceptable and match up to the standards of ‘feminine goodness’ and hence, they gain membership of good womanhood. The others are devalued and end up belonging to the group consisting of ‘bad girls and fallen women’ (p. 463). Furthermore, Cockrill and Nack (2013) reported that the behaviours generating the tribal stigma are sometimes of their own choice (e.g. promiscuity), which can be justified more easily by others as the reason why they deserve the stigma and have to take it on owing to personal failings. This echoes what Ellison (2003) strongly contended, whereby the social stigma attributed to never-married mothers is enforced during the process of categorising them by their marital status and birth-out-of-wedlock. Meanwhile, structural violence is perpetuated according to the criteria of female sexuality, fertility and maternity. As the values of diligence and thriftiness are honoured in a Confucian society, which also contribute to economic growth and help to form most of the social policies (Goodman & Peng, 1996), these mothers could also be criticised for being part of the ‘tribe’ of welfare recipients, whereby they are inclined to apply for benefits without working to support themselves or alternatively, they can remain in poverty and experience the shame in relation to it (Walker et al., 2013), neither of which match the principles of happiness in the Confucian context¹⁷.

¹⁷ According to Ip (2011), such virtues are mainly reserved for the intelligentsia-official class. For ordinary people, if they are hardworking, continuously successful, and bring pride and prosperity to the family or country, they will always be welcomed in people’s lives. Consequently, if parents cannot rank as one of the

The more an individual understands that they are stigmatised, the more their coping strategies are manipulated to match the social norms. As Goffman (1963) has commented, ‘the stigmatised person learns and incorporates the stand-points of the normal, acquiring thereby the identity beliefs of the wider society and a general idea of what it would be like to possess a particular stigma’ (p.45). That is, the stigmatised individual can be exposed to the wider society, learning the standards and norms in advance and then understanding that they are in a stigmatised situation. Similarly, Herek (2007) identified the concept of internalised stigma, which can be used to explain how much the individual accepts the stigma in their value system. Kung et al. (2004) contended that divorced single mothers have already learned the relevant social values pertaining to themselves and absorb them in their beliefs. This can have an impact on women’s autonomy in decision-making and/or in devising coping behaviours. For instance, some might choose to stay in an unhappy marriage owing to the stigmatising effect of being a welfare recipient. This anticipation of being a stigmatised welfare recipient might contribute further to the coping behaviours adopted by never-married single mothers. According to Jordal et al., (2013), due to the fear of shame, never-married mothers in Sri Lanka would firstly ‘express awareness of having trespassed norms of sexuality’ (i.e. self-blaming or attempt suicide) and ‘taking responsibility’ for the new born child by having him/her adopted or getting employment so as to raise him/her and thus, have a future family life. From these authors’ point of view, these mothers were unlikely to create a space to claim their status back as part of mainstream society.

3.5 The Theoretical Framework of the Study

After exploring the literature which constructed the several aspects of never-married single mothers’ life, my preliminary proposition is that: in such a society which highly treasures the value of family and marriage, never-married mothers are a group of single mothers who tend to suffer after their choice of being mothers. Notwithstanding, the potential that

top people in their generation, great expectations are put on the next generation to fulfil this dream. According to Y. Ku (2004), the value of self-cultivation is somehow one feature which may have contributed to the stability of society in the Confucian world, and thus has been favoured and promoted by governments. Sung (2003) contended that Confucianism, including the values of education, social harmony, and co-operation might be one of the factors that account for the recent rapid economic growth seen amongst East Asian countries.

signs of individualisation are emerging in the rapidly changing society which, in this study, is a Confucian context, it still has to be acknowledged, the influence of traditional values still exists. Here, the choice is sometimes one without choice, being one that needs to be examined within the perspectives of gender, class and traditional norms. Through the concept of ‘gendered moral rationalities’, this study will seek to understand the reason why and how some individuals decided to become a single mother in the Confucian context, by exploring the possible choices and constraints when they are making decisions pending to relationships, childbirth as well as in respect of work and care. This will allow for the first objective of this research to be addressed, that is, how and why some women become never-married single mothers in the Confucian context.

As never-married mothers, women face strong pressures in relation to every aspect of their lives in a Confucian-oriented society. First of all, they can easily fall into poverty when they are mothers who have to raise their child(ren) on their own. That is, they tend to struggle between work and care. Secondly, they are highly likely to be stigmatised owing to the fact they are widely seen as women who have committed a transgression. When both of these aspects operate together in their lives at the same time, the harm could be doubled. On the one hand, the label of their being ‘bad women’ can block them from receiving the resources they might obtain, once they are known to be single mothers. On the other, their pre-existing disadvantaged situation in economic terms as single mothers could foster extra stigmatising in their lives. In turn, the stigma could result in less support and financial help. From the discussion in Sections 3.3 and 3.4, it can be seen that levels of poverty are contributed to by prevailing structural factors and stigma is socially constructed and from the gender perspective. Therefore, it is assumed that these difficulties could originate from these mothers being women and from the presence of Confucian ideology. Based on this assumption, we can take steps to grasp further the effects of being a never-married mother in this context, and in so doing, achieve the second objective of this research endeavour, that is to understand the socio-relational and economic effects of being a never-married single mother.

Finally, to accomplish the third objective, unearthing the coping strategies used to handle poverty and stigma could prove essential. With regards to the management of poverty, the four dimensions of agency could be exercised, for it is believed that they will make use of personal, social, material and cultural resources through their social networks to manage

their daily economic difficulties. It cannot be neglected that class (socioeconomic background) along with a cultural and historical perspective is necessary when analysing the process of how the focal women deal with economic challenges. That is, mothers from better-off backgrounds might have totally different life experiences than those in the worse-off group. To deal with stigma individually, on the other hand, actions taken by these mothers could be information control when they wish to conceal their status from outsiders. Alternatively, it could take the form of tension control when they are encountering conflict. Collectively, these mothers could seek to transform social norms through forming collective action groups. Through the approaches these mothers adopt in their lives, we can further understand whether they have the capability to live their lives on their own, or are bound to suffer under the constraints from cultural and structural effects.

This framework is applied in the empirical Chapters 5, 6 and 7. In the next chapter, the methodology of this thesis is detailed in order to explain how the data was captured during the fieldwork.

Chapter 4 Methodology and Methods of the Research

After outlining the Taiwanese context and the theoretical framework for understanding never-married single mothers in Taiwan, this chapter presents the methodology of this research. As explained in the introduction chapter, the objectives of the research are to understand: women's decisions to become a single mother, the consequences and challenges of becoming one in the Taiwanese context, and finally, the strategies conducted to manage the challenges. Given these objectives, it is first explained in this chapter that a female-centred qualitative approach is the main orientation, supported by in-depth interviews and the technique of ecomapping (especially to understand the socio-relational challenges). In addition to this, how the fieldwork was facilitated and how the data were collected and analysed are also presented in detail. Finally, I also addressed my own reflections and certain ethical issues that arose when conducting interviews with participants about sensitive matters.

4.1 The Feminist Approach and the Stance of the Qualitative Method in this Research

As mentioned in the last chapter, this thesis is founded on a gender perspective in order to examine this group of mothers' situations, whereby I acknowledge that the fact that they are women impacts on their lives in distinct and often, negative ways. Accordingly, a feminist research approach was adopted when carrying out the data collection. Conducting feminist research raises the issues of research on whom, by whom and for whom, which are contested notions in the literature. According to Stanley and Wise (1993), whilst not entirely disagreeing with the concept of research 'on women', the involvement of male subjects is helpful for observing the interaction through which men cause the oppression of women. Similarly, Letherby (2003) contended that a feminist researcher conducting feminist research should 'give continuous and reflexive attention to the significance of gender as an aspect of all social life and within research, and consider further the significance of other differences between women and (some argue) the relevance of men's lives to a feminist understanding of the world' (p. 73). In other words, a researcher who adopts a feminist approach ought to take full account of gender issues, especially the situations in which women are more disadvantaged than men from the feminist point of view.

Stanley and Wise (1993) further asserted that feminist research should be conducted only 'by and for women' (p.31). In their opinion, only women possess the genuine 'feminist consciousness' due to 'concrete, practical and everyday experiences of being, and being treated as, *a woman*' (p. 32). The idea of 'double consciousness' coined by feminist scholars is seen as an advantage of women, whereby they know both theirs and men's worlds. That is, they understand both the daily tasks of housework and the '(male-dominated) public sphere of the capitalist marketplace', which the vast majority of men do not (Brooks, 2007, p. 64). This double consciousness further points to the value of the interviewees' participation in the research process. Moreover, Stanley and Wise (1993) emphasised that 'the product of feminist research should be directly used by women in order to formulate policies and provisions necessary for feminist activities' (p. 32), i.e. the research should be 'for women'. That is to say, feminist research should aim to improve the current circumstances for them. Furthermore, the authors extended the meaning of research 'for women' by stressing how to build a non-exploitative relationship between the researcher and the researched, which is believed by many feminist researchers as one of the essential principles of such endeavour (Letherby, 2003; Oakley, 1981).

The other point that feminist researchers have underscored is the unique experience of women as the subjects in feminist research. In contrast to the traditional male epistemological stance, feminist epistemology tends to 'contextualise' the established research methods, such that the 'private, personal, and subjective aspects of women's lives' can be detected (Allen, 2011, p. 25). Harding (1993), adopted a standpoint perspective, whereby she stressed the importance of 'the experience and lives of marginalised people, as they understand them' (p. 54), which thus takes account the process of obtaining knowledge as well as maintain the objectivity of the research endeavour. She argued that the standpoint theories 'set out a rigorous "logic of discovery" intended to maximise the objectivity of the results of the research and thereby to produce knowledge that can be for marginalised people (and those who would know what the marginalised can know) rather than for the use only of dominant groups in their projects of administering and managing the lives of marginalised people' (p.56). Furthermore, Olesen (2000) highlighted Harding's contribution of 'strong objectivity', which stressed that feminist researchers should be critical of their stance of their own work and also their relationship with the researched, whereby they should 'take the participant's view in looking at their own socially situated projects' (Olesen, 2000, p. 356). Consequently, it would appear reasonable to conclude that

feminist researchers with a standpoint-oriented approach are expected to be more reflexive to the knowledge generating process, whilst at the same time valuing the narrative of their research participants.

Whilst standpoint theories have established the basic perspectives of modern feminist research, they are not without criticism. Letherby (2003) pointed out that, first of all, these theories appear to imply the superiority of knowledge generated from women's lives, and second, they tend to unify women's situations or experience in one category (e.g. women in western world living in middle-class and being white) instead of valuing the difference between women. Several researchers have also mentioned their weakness in explaining the relationship between power and knowledge, and have consequently stressed a need to combine the standpoint perspective with a relativist postmodernist approach so as to consolidate the methodology employed (Maynard, 1994; Ning, 1998; Olesen, 2000; Wang, 2007a). Even Harding (1991) herself altered the claim that women have the ultimate privilege to produce the right knowledge by admitting there was the possibility of 'male feminism' existing. However, the effects of postmodernism with a stance of relativism have also caused concern. Harding (1987), in particular, raised the criticism that postmodernist feminists might uphold judgemental relativism and deny any form of 'feminist science', preferring to choose to only accept an overall opposition to 'false stories' and resistance to male oppression.

The stance taken by the feminist researchers would appear to be determined by the purpose of feminist research. That is, whether the researchers want to focus on the meaning of women's experience in a social world, which they consider as a privileged and superior knowledge, or whether they seek to understand the knowledge within the language and discourses without searching for a dominant narrative, forge the distinction between the standpoint and postmodernist perspectives. These approaches are sometimes seen as two ends of a spectrum. However, they both pertain to wanting to make a positive change in society by gathering evidence to be able to make recommendations for policy improvement. As Allen (2011) concluded, there is no specific method that can be claimed as being feminist research; and that the feminist standpoint epistemology and postmodern feminist should involve collaboratively creating a feminist approach to research. For, as Brooks (2006) highlighted, 'if women are going to work to influence, change, and create new social policies, it is imperative that they develop some common ground or shared

perspectives to meet with success' (p.74). Accordingly, the aim in the current research was to seek an approach that avoided adopting one of the two discussed polarised perspectives, one which would not only focus on each female participants' unique circumstances, or being biased to the most disadvantaged ones, but would also produce outcomes that could benefit policy in relation to them. In the next section, the data collection method will be explained and justified, from the feminist perspective as explained above.

4.2 The rationale behind the use of in-depth interviewing and ecomapping for this research

A qualitative method was chosen for this research for two reasons. First of all, as the purpose was to explore the decision these mothers made; the challenges they faced with regards to their decision making; and how they managed according to what resources they had, this would require a flexible and in-depth investigation to capture rich data, which a quantitative approach less likely to deliver (Bryman, 2016). Secondly, as the focal subjects constitute a group of mothers representing a very small proportion of single-mother households (see Subsection 3.1.1) and given their perceived inferior social position (see chapter 1) in the Taiwanese context, using quantitative methods would be inappropriate as it would be hard to generalise the case to each of the single mothers, and probably even make too strong assumptions and highly likely to be suppressive in getting the genuine meaning behind each answer. Thus, it is far more pertinent for research of this nature to involve documenting these mothers' narratives qualitatively through capturing their perspectives according to their own voices in a safe environment.

Based on these two reasons, and together with the feminist approach addressed above, I adopted the Epistemology of a critical approach. As Burns and Chantier (2011) contended, this approach considers judgemental relativism as being problematic as it neglects the existing power relations located in a specific social and political context. In contrast, the critical approach pertains to positioning the narratives in a specific social situation in order to underscore the 'inequalities and social divisions within society' (p.72). Given the nature of the subjects and the fact what they would reveal would be sensitive, personal and rich with meaning, the most appropriate instrument for data collection was deemed as being one-to-one in-depth interviews. According to Barbour and Schostak (2011), this method not only helps in ensuring that all the questions on the constructed interview schedule are

covered, for it also involves opportunity for prompting the interviewees to extend their responses, by, for example, providing narratives of what has happened them, thus generating rich in-depth data. Schostak also went on to emphasise a critical attribute of the in-depth interview approach is that it can ‘generate the intersubjective features of the public and private spaces of social life’ (p.65), whereby ‘the sense of the public scenes of action and their borders with the private realms of feelings, hopes, ambitions, frustrations, fears and things that cannot be said in public’ can be revealed.

As Hogan et al. (2007) have highlighted in the process of in-depth interviewing, ‘the lack of visual depiction of networks at the data-gathering stage obscures data collection, because neither researchers nor respondents can see concrete representations of what they are discussing’ (p.117). Consequently, in addition to in-depth interviewing, another tool for collecting data was adopted, namely, ecomapping, as explained next. As discussed in Chapter 3, it was anticipated that many never-married single mothers would encounter significant personal network changes during the process of becoming a mother. It was thus deemed beneficial to bring in a tool to record these changes in a way that could be easily understood during the course of the interview. Ecomapping, according to the social work and clinical literature, is considered a powerful visualisation tool for detecting a client’s network and its relationship with him or her, in order to understand whether any of its members could potentially be part of their resources (Hartman, 1995; Olesen et al., 2004). Specifically, according to Antonucci (1986), by using a diagram with three rings of concentric circles, an individual’s personal network can be hierarchically presented as: the very close ones, the somewhat close ones, and those not considered as being in important position, but they still play some sort of role in the network. Moreover, according to Ray and Street (2005), the process of collaborative ecomapping by the researcher and the researched could enhance the validation of the data. In sum, in this research, in order to understand the transformation of the social-relational and financial circumstances, the people or institutes who offered either type of support before and/or after the event of unwed pregnancy were written down and probed through this visual aid during the interview process.

How I used this tool was in accordance with Hogan et al. (2007) and Antonucci (1986), who employed the technique of name generator, where the alters (an individual or an institute in the network) are identified one by one according to the closeness and

importance of them to the ‘ego’ (the subject) in the three aforementioned concentric circles on a sheet of A3 paper. I then prompted them as to whether any alter, who in most instances would be considered important, such as a parent, or according to the storyline they have begun to relate through the exercise, has been omitted¹⁸. According to McCarty, et al. (2007), this way has been very helpful in terms of extracting the interviewee’s memory and listing as many alters as possible, in comparison to merely freestyles drawings. After the interviewee finished locating all her alters in the circles, I asked her about the role of each alter in her life and what they meant to her during her decision-making process, and the consequences, as well as the coping strategies she used to deal with the event of becoming a mother without getting married (See Appendix 3). In this visualised tool, through which information in relation to the current social network and whether there are key people playing a decisive role in the decision-making process, leading the provision of resources or sanctioning them can be elicited and discussed in-depth. It should be noted that the original authors used both qualitative and quantitative methods in their data analysis, but unlike the current research, did not follow up the ecomapping by in-depth interviewing. More specifically, in the current study the tool was used as a means to enhance the in-depth interviewing process, elicit the narratives, and not in any quantitative manner.

During the interviews with these mothers, moreover, the social network before and after the unwed pregnancy was respectively documented, i.e. there were two ‘maps’ for each interviewee (see Appendix 1). Following the recommendation of Feld et al (2007), the changes of the characteristics of the alters and the ties (the type of relationship with between the interviewee and her alters), as well as the size and the composition of the network after the event, in this case becoming a mother, were considered in terms of pre- and post- visual comparisons. By asking the mothers to make this comparison, it was anticipated that evidence of the changes that had occurred would bring to light experience of stigmatisation in many cases. It was also expected that through the ‘map’, how they deployed the formal or informal resources could be identified, thereby revealing how they dealt with the challenges following the event of becoming a mother. The qualitative data

¹⁸ Based on Hogan et al. (2007), the role categories of an alter for the participant could range from: 1) family, 2) other relatives, 3) neighbours, 4) colleagues, 5) Friends (from the Internet or other social activities), and 6) others.

elicited from ecomapping is analysed and presented in Chapter 5 when exploring the key people who had an impact on the focal mothers' decision-making process; Chapter 6, in the section discussing the social-relational consequences of becoming a never-married single mother (see Section 6.2); and Chapter 7, when examining how they manage their resources through their social networks.

As a group of mothers who are stigmatised in the Taiwanese context, adopting ecomapping during the interview brought several other benefits to this research. According to Ray and Street (2005), ecomapping can be an innovative tool in nursing research as it not only facilitates the collection of data regarding resources during the interview, but it also invites the interviewee to participate in establishing their own diagram. This requires the researcher to check with them on an ongoing basis that the information they have provided and placed on the ecomap is close to their perception of the circumstances, thus ensuring the validation of the data. Moreover, I also found that based on this collaborative approach the differences between the researcher and the researched could be narrowed. This was found also by Rempel et al. (2007), who discovered that the equal scenario during the joint drawing of the diagram, not only helps establish a rapport, for it also generates a channel for revealing sensitive issues. I also acknowledge that in this research once the rapport was built, it was easier to obtain data that were sensitive or to clarify any information that was unclear. Through the comparison of the different maps, it is also a sensitive moment if they realised the loss of an important alter, which becomes one of the challenges of using this tool. However, as reminded by Rempel, et al (2007), it was still essential to 'respect the sensitive nature of this revelation in the conversation that ensued' (p.411). Accordingly, when confidences were revealed, I reassured the interviewees that the information would never be identified as coming from them and made sure they would not be affected by the process of comparison. In general, as Ray and Street (2005) concluded, 'ecomaps are a catalyst for obtaining more in-depth data, with the illustrations providing discussion triggers for both researchers and interviewees' (p.550). Indeed, this emerged as being the case in the process of interviewing these Taiwanese never-married single mothers for this study and definitely helped enrich the narratives elicited from them.

4.3 Fieldwork: Process of data collection and sample strategies

In this section, the process of the fieldwork is discussed. First, how the pilot interviews were generated and the data were used is described. Next, the sample strategies in recruiting the interviewees from different resources and the design of the interview are explained. Finally, the background information of these mothers is also provided.

4.3.1 Pilot interviews and the interview schedule

Before embarking on the field work in January 2014, I drafted an interview schedule in accordance with the research questions and research goals. Later on, in order to examine the effectiveness of the draft interview schedule, I approached a single mother in Bath from her private network. Whilst that person was not from Taiwan and hence, some questions would not be applicable for her, this still proved to be beneficial in that it gave me insight into how the subsequent interviews could best be carried out as well as whether the sets of questions were easy to understand and would capture the essence of the interviewees' narratives. Consequently, prior to the main study, this pilot interview allowed for me to modify the interview schedule in terms of probing in-depth in various ways such as including tracking the meaning of them being a 'single mother' and how they think of this term before and after, which helped me to see whether the event of become one could also change their thoughts about the group they used to look down to and place stigma on when themselves become one of them.

Regarding the second stage, as the first draft interview schedule was mainly derived from the research questions and literature review, I aimed to gather more information from the professional's perspectives. It was anticipated that professionals who worked with this group of mothers, such as social workers, could carry a more accurate picture about these mothers' lives when they interacted with them in their daily work. Consequently, a focus group with eight social workers in Taiwan was conducted before the start of the interviews in order to capture the general characteristics of never-married single mothers. However, it was essential that I took care of two matters: first is the fact that I was a social worker who worked in a similar area. It is very likely that these social workers gave permission for my interviews based on the same professional status we had shared. It therefore became an advantage that I can approach and observe their thoughts on never-married single mothers. However, I had to remind myself that I was carrying out a research rather than sharing an

experience of providing services like these social workers during focus groups and a critical reflection on the research process was necessary. In addition, I had to look out for any potential prejudices or discrimination amongst the social workers' personal opinions (e.g. mothers' relational expectation and welfare dependence), and also not let myself be affected by the perspectives of these professionals, or generalise their experiences to the mothers I interviewed, only focusing on the aspects of information they covered in the focus groups. To prevent this from happening, apart from the interview schedule (See Appendix 2), I also invited them to think about what was the most challenging moment for them to provide services to these mothers, in order to understand the potential risks of gaining information from them. In general, the social workers I interviewed offered their professional observations on this group of mothers very much based on their assessment framework deployed during case work. For example, as they highlighted how their services focused on mothers with a deficiency in resources, I decided to place greater emphasis on the changes to these mothers' social networks before and after the pregnancy, which meant using the tool of ecomapping in a slightly different way to how it has been used before¹⁹. After these changes, two further focus groups with social workers in different parts of Taiwan were held after the beginning of the fieldwork. However, the results were not so significant that the interview schedule needed to be changed again.

According to the experiences of the pilot study and the focus groups with the social workers, the final interview schedule was constructed. The topics of enquiry in the interviews covered with each mother were:

- decisions made on the subject of pregnancy and motherhood, given her non-married status;
- her subjective feelings about being a never-married mother;
- social circumstances, including relationships with family, colleagues, friends and neighbours;

¹⁹ The process of placing alters on the map encompassed two steps: first is to identify the alters in each circle, second is to draw lines to connect ego and alter. In the second ecomap which all the interviewees were asked to draw requires the interviewee to memorise. The researcher began to take over in the second step so the support would be written in a clearer sense while the interviewee could just talk and describe, and would compare the significant role changes such as family, friends or any other which flag up the impact of the event of becoming a single mother.

- financial circumstances, including employment, social assistance and the child's father's support;
- her experiences when interacting with formal welfare services, including care helpers and local administrative agencies;
- her strategies of managing social and financial crises;
- her expectations about future relationships and life with her children.

A semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix 3), with open-ended questions assisted with the ecomapping technique, was used to obtain details, such as: the mothers' feelings in terms of having this status in Taiwan along with her coping strategies regarding employment, financial issues and childcare arrangements. However, the topics were not fixed, but rather, taken up in accordance with the flow of the interview.

According to Flick (2002), in order to obtain answers reflecting respondents' beliefs and perceptions on certain events or daily phenomenon, the technique of episodic narratives interviews²⁰ is useful for eliciting information around the focal event and the respondents' experiences and meanings having experienced it. Consequently, during the process of the interview, I used the signpost language suggested by this author, which involved inviting interviewees to recall the sequences of events they had been through before and after pregnancy as well as reporting what this had meant to them. For example, questions such as, 'Can you recall what was happened while you made decision of not having an abortion?' Or 'Could you explain more about what the event of being a never-married mother means to you?,' would be put to invite the interviewee to elaborate more about her experiences and reflections, in particular, regarding the event of becoming a mother. This technique also fitted well with the ecomapping when inviting the interviewee to recall the 'alters' in the listing process of their previous social network.

²⁰ According to Flick (2002), this refers to an interview technique that involves adopting the advantages of both the narrative and the semi-structured interview. It focuses on the meaning and experience of one specific event for the subject so as to obtain knowledge it (or a situation) from their own perspective. Given it was initially designed to compare narratives of everyday experiences between different groups (e.g. opinions of technology from different professionals (Flick, 1996), it was still appropriate for attributing meanings to specific events in relation to never-married single mothers, despite this being a narrower focus.

4.3.2 Sample strategies

The sampling strategy was purposive. That is, the sample needed to involve mothers with the features of being: ‘adult’, ‘single’, and having ‘been the main guardian of their children’. Regarding my sample frame, according to Ritchie et al. (2014), the ideal number for qualitative methods research should be between 12 and 60. It was planned that I would recruit 30 interviewees within six months as it was perceived that this would deliver data saturation and time efficiency and in the end, this number of participants who met the above criteria were recruited. In order to be interviewed, they could have had partners who were cohabitating with them, but their official marital status was required to be that of single before the time of the interview. Moreover, they could have engaged with the state welfare, in one form or another, or not done so to be eligible.

Given the difficult challenge of seeking participants who were willing to share an intimate and generally sensitive experience in a context which might still place them in an unusual status, I had to seek such people through a range of different channels in order to gather a sufficiently large sample for this type of interview. First of all, requests were made to the main governmental systems of support, the Women’s Welfare Service Centres (WWSCs)²¹ located in the big cities in Taiwan²². At the half-way stage of the fieldwork, I began to expand the request to other counties and NGOs that provide similar services to single mothers as the WWSCs’ gatekeepers in big cities reported that they were too busy to spend much time helping, as well as some potential interviewees in these contexts did not wish to participate. In the end, 24 out of 30 of the interviewees were recruited from these two channels (see Table 4.1).

²¹The welfare service centres based at county or city level are operated by social workers. They target single parents or disadvantaged women as their clients and provide services such as financial assistance, counselling and resources networking.

²² Taipei, Taichung and Kaohsiung are the three main big urban areas in Taiwan. I started to collect my sample from the city of Taichung (in the middle of Taiwan), and subsequently, recruited from the other cities in order to get wide coverage in the sample.

Table 4.1 Regions and sources of the interviewees

Regions			Sources		
North	7	(23%)	Friends	2	(7%)
Central	12	(40%)	The Internet	2	(7%)
South	8	(27%)	Govt/NGOs	24	(80%)
East	3	(10%)	Snowballing	2	(7%)
Total	30		Total	30	

In addition to the interviewees obtained through the public sector, in order to understand the lives of never-married single mothers who had not engaged with the state welfare, I searched internet forums and counselling support services, in order to find such women. However, the response was not good, with only two of the mothers replying to the request. However, two of these mothers introduced me to their friends who had had similar experience. To achieve the desired number of participants for the research, I also obtained help from my personal network, which brought forward two more mothers who were willing to participate.

4.3.3 The interviews

The interviews were all conducted by me between August and December 2014 in Taiwan. The duration of each interview was between one and half and two hours. Whilst in several instances the interviews were in Taiwanese, mostly, the interviewee and I spoke in Mandarin. During the phone call invitation to attend the interview, the location and time were chosen by the interviewees according to what was convenient. Some chose to be interviewed in public places, such as a café, a restaurant or a convenience store, whilst others opted for their house or flat. At the beginning of the interview, a consent form (see Appendix 4) was handed out to the interviewee to explain some crucial pre-interview information, such as the purpose of the research, the need for making a recording, which would be subsequently transcribed, as well as their right to stop the interview whenever they wished to. Moreover, I also emphasised the principles of privacy and confidentiality, reassuring them that their names would be anonymised and that there would be no information published that might expose their identity, especially to those who were recruited from social workers. Moreover, they were informed that storage of their transcript would be in an encrypted form. All of these actions were aimed at creating a comfortable atmosphere for the interviewees relate their experience as a never-married

mother. Along with the information statement, a voucher or the gift was given at the beginning of the interview as thanks for their contribution to the research.

As explained on the consent form, the interview began with the collection of basic information, such as age, children's age, level of education and occupation. However, in some cases respondents were reluctant to disclose their status of education or employment status. In which case I would turn to the ecomap first in order to build a rapport and would ask them about such personal information later. In fact, after using ecomapping, the interviewees were sometimes more willing to recount their experience and beliefs in great depth along with the main body of the questions. Moreover, as ecomapping would elicit relative information pertaining to the follow-up questions in advanced, I often had to ignore the order of the interview schedule and instead, work with the flow of the conversation. After asking all the questions from the interview schedule, I would end the interview with questions such as 'Is there anything that I have not asked about?' or 'Is there anything else you want to share with me?' This was to elicit whether there was anything the interviewee had forgotten to disclose or still wished to.

As a former social worker, I was used to entering into one-to-one conversations with an open mind. That is, I did not make any judgments about the interviewee, respecting who they were and the subject matter that they talked about. During the interviews, I drew on several counselling techniques that I had been trained in, which helped in clarifying some of the information provided and calming the participants' emotions. For, several interviewees became upset about past events and gave emotional responses, such as crying or raising their voices. On these occasions, I would slow down and acknowledge this shift in emotion so that they could see I was listening and being supportive. However, as warned by Lee (1993), I should question myself as to why I may or may not want to offer further help. In fact, as a former social worker, I was aware that I should not become personally involved in the interviewees' problems. In particular, I was aware that those eligible for benefits had their own social workers to help them and thus, it was not my place to become involved. This will be discussed further in Section 4.5 regarding my reflections on the research process.

Some difficulties also emerged in terms of the interview set up. First, the environment of the interview was not as always as confidential as hoped for, especially when the mothers

were interviewed in their own homes. Even though I would make a phone call to make sure how many people were there before visiting, there was often some ‘surprise’ greeting me when I arrived. For example, two of the interviewees’ parents were around, and provided their own opinions on the accidental pregnancy. In order to gather genuine accounts from the mothers themselves without the influence of their important others, I had to extend the duration of interview or politely asked the parent to leave. Moreover, as most of the interviewees stayed at home taking care of their new-born baby, during the interview, I would have to stop so that the mother could take care of the child. Secondly, as I found the interviewees through gate keepers, some of them had missed the fact that their clients had got married after all. In these situations, the interview was continued so to not distress the interviewee, but the data had to be excluded²³.

At the end of the interview, I would remind the interviewee what might happen next regarding the research. For instance, she explained that follow up phone calls might be needed to be made to fill in some gaps in the inquiry that had not been covered. After the transcript of the interview was completed, my final contact with the interviewee was sending a copy of the transcript to her to confirm that it accurately reflected her experience and that she was still agreeable to it being used. Among all the transcripts sent, only one interviewee called back to make sure her child’s name could be changed into a pseudonym and revised some information in relation to the childcare service she utilised.

4.3.4 Backgrounds of the interviewees

To provide a general picture of the interviewees in this research, their characteristics are presented in the following table (Table 4.2) by the criteria of their personal status, children’s status and relational status.

Among the 30 interviewees, nearly half of them were in the age group between 31 and 40 years old (47%); only one third of them had completed higher education (including university/ vocational college or a master’s degree); and half of them were employed or self-employed, thus having some sort of financial income. However, as mentioned in the sampling strategy section, as most of the interviewees were recruited from WWSCs in Taiwan, many were receivers of welfare benefits (80%) when they were interviewed

²³ Three cases had to be excluded in this sense.

regardless of their level of education or employed status. With regards to these interviewees' children, there were 40 in total, with 23 of the mothers having one child, five having two and three of them having three children. More than half of them were boys (55%) and in terms of their age, nearly half of them are under three years old (43%). Moreover, as many of the interviewees came through WWSCs, they tended to have younger children, with an urgent need for benefits.

Table 4.2 Interviewees' characteristics

Personal status			Children's status		Relational status	
Age			Number of children		Marital Status	
18-30	9 (30%)		1	23 (77%)	Single (No relationship)	23 (77%)
31-40	14 (47%)		2	5 (17%)	Single (In new relationship(s))	2 (7%)
41-50	7 (23%)		3	2 (7%)	Cohabiting (With the child's father)	5 (17%)
Total	30		Total	30	Total	30
Education			Children's sex		Mothers with	
Junior high school	8 (27%)		Boy	22 (55%)	One relationship with her child(ren)'s father	26 (87%)
Senior high school/ Vocational school	12 (40%)		Girl	18 (45%)	Two relationships and two children	3 (10%)
University/ Vocational college	8 (27%)		Total	40	Three relationships and three children	1 (3%)
Master degree	2 (7%)				Total	30
Total	30					
Employment status			Children's age ²⁴		Living with	
Employed	13 (43%)		Under one year old	9 (23%)	The child's father	4 (13%)
Self-employed	2 (7%)		1	6 (15%)	Her family	13 (43%)
Unemployed	2 (7%)		2	2 (5%)	Alone with her child	13 (43%)
Non-employed	13 (43%)		3	6 (15%)	Total	30
Total	30		4	5 (13%)		
Welfare receivers			5	1 (3%)		
Yes	24 (80%)		7-12	5 (13%)		
No	6 (20%)		Over 12	6 (15%)		
Total	30		Total	40		

²⁴ In the official education system in Taiwan, the compulsory age for primary school is seven to twelve, and for junior high school is 13 to 15.

Finally, these interviewees were experiencing diverse forms of relationships with their partners and family. 26 of them had had only one child or two children with the child's father while they are still in relationship. However, some of them had experienced more than one relationships and hence had more than one child. After breaking up, 23 of them were single and without any new relationships having developed. However, there were two of them beginning a new relationship and five of them were cohabiting with their partners. It is noted that the single mothers with a new relationship(s) and the cohabiting mothers are still considered single in either the registration or the welfare system in Taiwan. Concerning the living arrangements, apart from mothers who were cohabiting with the child's fathers²⁵, 13 of them had been able to stay with their family and the other 13 were living alone with their children at the time they were interviewed. Further detailed information, including the interviewees' pseudonyms, occupations and past work history is displayed in Appendix 4.

4.4 Data Analysis

After the stage of data collecting, data analysis is the next to be considered. In this research, as the theoretical framework is founded on identifying signs of individualisation and stigmatised experiences, thematic analysis according to Ritchie et al. (2003) was the main tool I applied to process the data. According to Spencer et al. (2013), this approach is applied at the beginning of the analysis and is aimed at discovering meaning in data, according to specific themes and concepts. Subsequently, new themes or concepts generated, with the linkages between these ideas being investigated in a systematic way. Through this analytical method, I was able to uncover the process of these women becoming single mothers through the use of existing theme sets, such as time and challenges, as well as from the theoretical lens of individualisation and stigma. This process resulted in new themes and concepts rooted in the data being identified.

According to Spencer et al. (2013), the two main steps of thematic analysis are data management, and abstraction and interpretation. These two are divided into specific procedures that should be revisited, thus helping the data to be understood in a more profound way. During the stage of data management, I follow the process of 1)

²⁵ One cohabiting mother's partner was in jail when she was interviewed, thus her living arrangement was termed 'alone with her children'.

familiarisation, 2) constructing an initial thematic framework, 3) indexing and sorting, 4) reviewing data extracts, and 5) data summary and display. While in the stage of abstraction and interpretation, the steps of 6) constructing categories and 7) identifying the linkages is focused upon. To organise the data, I adopted the qualitative analysis software Nvivo from CAQDAS. This is a powerful software that perform nearly all the process in relation to data management described above. However, in relation to the step of data summary and display, I chose to use Excel from Microsoft with the 'Framework' tool, as developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), in order to work out the concepts and linkages, as this can be printed out as a hardcopy multiple times and cut up according to different subjects so as to explore the data in a manual way.

At the stage of familiarisation, I tried to immerse myself in the data and so become 'familiar' with it. When transcribing the recorded interviews, I would make note of topics which are relevant to the research questions and some possible perspectives for the future analysis. At this stage, I also found out some narratives were unclear or missing and so, I would try to contact the interviewees in order to address this. Through the process, I was able to form an initial indexing list for the next step – constructing an initial thematic framework (See Appendix 6). The initial index chart consisted of nine main themes with 51 subthemes and was produced to uncover the process of how these interviewees became mothers and to address the research questions. The process of constructing the thematic framework was revisited several times in order to form sufficient themes to cover all the issues emerging from the data. After starting the process of indexing and revisiting theoretical framework, two more themes emerged, namely, stigma and gender, which were also added to the chart.

At the stage of indexing, all the transcripts and other materials were uploaded and indexed by the qualitative software Nvivo. The index chart constructed during the previous stage was replicated and built up as a 'nodes' list in the software to index, or in other qualitative analytic terminology, to code the data. The advantage of using the Nvivo software here is that after deciding and awarding a node (i.e. a theme or a subject) to a specific text, the software will automatically help sorting texts with the same node together without losing the sources. Moreover, I was able to read the whole texts under the same node together, there by being able to delete irrelevant text out or reallocate it to different nodes as appropriate. During the process of indexing and sorting, I also added in another category

regarding these mothers' relational history, as I considered this would help in understanding the interviewees' process of acquiring that status as well as capturing their current and future relational expectations in detail.

Regarding the data summary stage, as Spencer et al. (2014) highlighted, this has two advantages: one is to reduce the text to a more reasonable level to deal with; and the other is to purify the substance of the text. At the stage, I formed Frameworks in Excel files according to the main themes with columns assigned by subthemes and rows by interviewees. The rows also contained information about their characteristics, such as age and employment status in order to ascertain whether any of these showed any patterns in terms of dealing with being a never-married mother. The challenge at this stage for me, is to write a concise summary without losing the genuine meaning or the unique expressions from the interviewees. Whilst not too being interpretive, as Spencer et al. (2014) have pointed out, I still need to put some analytical comments alongside the summary that can be referred to in the future. After the summary was written in each cell, I printed the form out and cut up the paper according to each interviewee, in order to enter the next domain of analysis, that of developing categories.

For the stage of developing categories, I manually compared different groups of interviewees according to the responses they gave or characteristics they had. Through the process of comparison and categorisation, and also, relating these categories back to the research questions, I decided to arrange and present the data according to time. In the first empirical chapter (Chapter 5), the process of these women becoming mothers, no matter whether it was their will or not, is presented. In the second empirical chapter (Chapter 6), their difficulties after becoming a mother without getting married are explored in order to understand the economic and social-relational consequences of being someone 'different' in a traditional society. Finally, their reflections and transformation regarding being a never-married single mother are considered in three categories and several cases studies presented in the final empirical chapter (Chapter 7).

Another issue regarding my analysis is the challenge of moving between languages. The interviews will be conducted in Chinese or Taiwanese and the transcripts analysed in Chinese or Taiwanese, to prevent deviations in the meanings. Only narratives quoted in the thesis were translated into English. Apart from the narrative data, basic personal information such as age, number and ages of children, education, occupation and duration

of single motherhood are collected during the interview, and presented in the form of descriptions.

4.5 Reflections on research ethics: A researcher working on sensitive issues with sensitive subjects

When conducting the fieldwork, I encountered several sensitive situations that could have affected the outcomes of the interview, two of which required careful reflection after the research. One pertains to the main sources for obtaining the interviewees, namely, social workers in the governmental sector, and the other was the role of the researcher, having also been a social worker. Regarding the former, this raised the matter as to whether the narratives or opinions expressed by the interviewees introduced by them would be affected by the power of these professionals, or the authorities they represent. As Webster et al., (2014) have pointed out, it should be noted by the researcher that the freewill of participating in research could be compromised when the gatekeepers, consciously or unconsciously, exert their authority over the potential interviewees. It is highly likely that given the interviewees in this study were in an unequal relationship with these professionals and the welfare system, they did not participate voluntarily, nor did they report the 'ugly truth' when what they told might be perceived to damage the interests of their service provider. Consequently, as most of the interviewees came from these gatekeepers, I tried to protect my interviewees by two strategies. First, at the beginning of the interview she would encourage the interviewee to say anything freely and frankly as noted in the consent form. Meanwhile, I would also highlight that I could stop or not answer if she was reluctant to tell her story. By so doing, it was anticipated that the interviewees would feel more comfortable and trusting when they shared their stories. To avoid intruding upon the relationship between the gatekeepers and their clients, the second approach adopted by me was strict confidentiality. Regarding which, if the interviewee intended to, or indeed commented about the social workers who offered her services, especially negatively, I promised she would not discuss what was said to anybody after the interview.

Another sensitive issue I had to bear in mind throughout the process of the fieldwork was my working experience as a social worker before initiating my PhD study. As a former social worker who worked at one of the WWSCs, I might still have possessed the working principles of that profession, such as engaging in the clients' lives in urgent situations or

connecting resources for them. However, at all times I took great care to remain as a researcher during the interviewing process and not adopting my previous role as a social worker, who gave advice on how the interviewees could improve their lives. Further, as highlighted by Lee (1993), difference in socioeconomic status can lead to a feeling of distance between the researchers and their interviewees, and ‘even ostensibly equal or mutually satisfying research relationships may nevertheless conceal more subtle forms of domination’ (p.109). As most of the participants had lower levels of education than me and were from working-class backgrounds, it is possible that the power relations did have an impact during the interviewing. This combination of factors could have meant that some of the women would not have been willing to be candid with the researcher about their lives. This fact was borne in mind during the interviews and I worked hard to avoid the sense of my ‘possibly-possessed’ superiority or ability to control the interview, consciously endeavouring to portray an open minded and sympathetic attitude towards the interviewees’ narratives so they would not feel ashamed and thus, reluctant to talk.

4.6 The Ethical Issues of the Research

There are three particular ethical concerns with this research: obtaining the permission of the gate keepers, ensuring subjects gave informed consent to participate and the protection of their privacy. In order to obtain the permission of the gate keepers, the purpose of the study and complete process of the interview was explained so as to generate mutual understanding regarding the work. I took the advantage of attending gatekeepers’ monthly meetings or case meetings to explain the purpose of the research to potential participants. As mentioned, focus groups with social workers were also held to collect general information about never-married mothers for whom they provided services, and to obtain insights regarding their needs or difficulties before conducting interviews. The information collected from the gatekeepers was not about specific mothers and was general in nature, which proved useful when developing the interview schedule. Once the gate keepers had agreed, identified their target clients, and had passed on the contact information, I started making contact with the subjects. However, as mentioned, the confidentiality of the social workers’ clients was ensured at this point in order for them not be able to be identified by the service provider.

In terms of the informed consent and privacy protection, as Christians (2008) has contended, the interviewees should participate in the research voluntarily with open and

complete information regarding the research being revealed. Moreover, their identity and the location when being interviewed should be anonymous. In addition, as mentioned in the Section 4.1, I adopted a feminist approach when conducting the interviews and data analysis, upholding principles, such as consciously minimising exploitation during the interview, avoiding treating the subjects as objects and avoiding their oppression (Bryman, 2016). It is hoped that by following these points, I can establish a balanced research relationship and guarantee that the subjects' voice can be truly heard. In practical terms, a consent form was offered before the interview, which contained: the aims of the study, the process of the interview, the protection of the anonymity of respondents' names, their rights to withdraw or change their information, and the confidentiality of all the information they were going to provide.

During the interview, due to the sensitive nature of the respondents being single mothers in a traditional society, such as Taiwan, I remained aware of issues of stigma and shame and developed sensitive research practices to ensure that mothers would feel valued within the study. This I did by taking care with regards to my own language/terminology and the questions posed. Moreover, the environment in which the interview needs take place to be governed according to the following two principles: being comfortable enough to allow the subject to feel free to speak; and safe enough by protecting the subjects' privacy. Consequently, the counselling rooms in WWSCs were often the first choice regarding location. Their place of work or public areas situated nearby, such as a library or a quiet café were the venues for other interviewees, depending on what they preferred. However, if the interviewee only felt comfortable talking at home, I would pay them a visit and was aware that there might be some interruptions during the interview. As aforementioned, some of the interviews were longer when there were somebody else around (usually their family) and the interviewee could become distracted or unwilling to reveal some of the critical information regarding the present family situation.

Whilst the donation that was made to respondents was intended as a gift showing gratitude for participating in the study, it was important that it did not turn into a financial incentive that could act a source of bias in sampling or narrative data content (Pan, 2003, p.381) and hence, the value was kept at approximately £10 in New Taiwanese Dollar. The information regarding the gift was advertised while recruiting subjects and it was handed to interviewees after the interview was finished. It should be noted that this arrangement was

not the main reason these mothers agreed to be interviewed in the end. In fact, it was the quality of the relationship with their social workers that appeared to be the main driver of whether they would like to be interviewed or not.

4.7 Summary of this chapter

Given the sensitivity of interviewing a group of women with potential stigma, the design of this research involved a feminist-based approach, looking at their personal experience when they made their decisions to become mothers. According to the approach, the researcher should be constantly reflexive and welcome those being researched to be part of the process. This provided chances for these mothers to explain themselves in a less oppressed scenario when compared to their daily lives. In order to invite the interviewees to really participate, the technique of ecomapping was added during in-depth interview, and the visualisation of each interviewee's network change assisted this. Moreover, the power relationship was acknowledged during the process of interviewing and I bore in mind that the gate keepers and myself might be the ones who place pressure on them and had to avoid replicating the unequal relationship during the interview. In the next three chapters, the findings from the analysis of the empirical data generated according to these methods are presented.

Chapter 5 Seeking a Status: Never-married mothers' Accounts of the Decision-making Process

Having reviewed the literature regarding signs of individualisation and stigma on women, the following three chapters turn to the voices of the focal mothers in this study. In this chapter, following what Rowlingson and McKay (1998) have identified the sequence of decisions made by never-married mothers (see Figure 1.1) in the decision to become one is presented as a chronological process, which tracks the ways in which the lives of the women in the study unfolded as they moved from being single women to being single mothers. In doing so it reveals the challenges and changes that pregnancy and birth outside of wedlock presented for these mothers as they attempted to negotiate a significant change in their personal, social and economic circumstances. The chapter explores the complex moral and social dimensions attendant on the mothers' decision making, whilst at the same time exploring whether the reason(s) behind their decisions to keep their children were influenced by internal or external factors or both.

To start with, how these women's lives unfolded is elicited through an exploration of the mothers' history with the child(ren)'s fathers prior to finding themselves pregnant (Section 5.1). This is followed by an investigation into the first and critical point of decision-making that the mothers faced when they found out they were pregnant and had to discuss the future with the child's father (Section 5.2). The social and emotional difficulties faced by these women trying to develop or sustain a relationship with their future child's father are covered in 5.3, whilst their final 'choice' to become an un-married mother despite the cultural, social and economic consequences of such a decision are examined in Section 5.4. In these four sections, the constraints and the opportunities experienced by these mothers are examined in detail, to shed light on how and why they decided to become un-married mothers in the context of a society where single parenthood is still in many ways socially and culturally unacceptable.

5.1 Prior Relationships: the start, and restart of the journey

In this section, excerpts from interviews with never-married mothers illustrate the various pathways into their relationships and subsequently, into single motherhood. In contrast to

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (2003) perspective that many women nowadays have the capacity to create their own biography, or as Giddens (1992) claimed, are increasingly able to engage in an 'open project' to determine their life pathways, the evidence presented here shows that almost invariably never-married single mothers in Taiwan are unable to achieve these goals owing to the constraints they face in the Confucian society.

Among the mothers whose narratives which drew from ecomaps are presented in this section, most of them, like any other couple in a relationship, had an ordinary beginning to their relationship with their partner. For example, they were introduced by friends or had worked as colleagues, this being the most common way of meeting someone with a future relationship in mind in modern Taiwan. Pei-ti, a 29-year-old mother with a five-month-old son, was introduced to her ex-boyfriend by one of her friends. Although the relationship did not go well after two years, she does not blame her friend too much.

*We knew each other through a friend. She introduced a very... [shakes her head](...)
She didn't know how his personality was. She is not the one to be blamed. Yeah,
things revealed themselves after [unclear].*

(Pei-ti)

Like Pei-ti, several other mothers had encountered similar situations where their friends were the match-makers, but had failed in the task of match-making. However, most of them did not blame their friends, since they considered it was not their fault. However, for Ching-ching, a 38-year-old mother with two sons aged 18 and two, whose second son's father was introduced by a mutual friend when they thought he was an ideal husband with a stable job, the breakdown of the relationship resulted in permanent estrangement from this friend.

Several of the mothers had to leave their work because the child's father was one of their ex-colleagues. For them, it would have become very complicated if they remained in the same company, seeing each other every day. Fang-ling, for example, worked as a production line worker with a stable income alongside the person she was having an affair with, but had had to leave when she became pregnant and hence, was financially vulnerable at the time of interview.

Because I was pregnant, and my body figure had changed, it was not possible to stay the company. (...) And actually, the child's father was one of my colleagues, and he was a foreigner²⁶. (...) I didn't want her [her daughter] to get hurt so I didn't want to stay there anymore.

(Fang-ling, a 40-year-old mother with a 3-year-old daughter)

Her reason for leaving the company was not only because of her daughter, it was also due to the change of the shape of her body, which made her feel very embarrassed. This resonates with Goffman (1963) notion of 'the discredited' ones, whose appearance is recognisable as those who did something 'wrong' and hence, easily became stigmatised. If they wanted to avoid people's prying questions, they would have to engage with a series strategies to manage the situation.

As shown above, like many other couples, these mothers' relationships with their ex-partners eventually ended. The break-ups eventually damaged their relationships with the friends who had introduced them, because of the awkwardness and often they were forced to leave work in order to hide the fact of never-married motherhood. In the end, when their relationships ended, these women's personal and social networks could suffer. As is common today, however, some of the mothers met their ex-boyfriends on the Internet instead of through their personal networks. Thus, the break-ups did not affect their personal relationships as much as for those mothers who met their partners through personal networks.

Other mothers met their partners through jobs that had sexual connotations²⁷ as this was the only acceptably remunerative work they could get. The partners were either colleagues or customers in restaurants or pubs. It is, however, a situation reflecting the disadvantaged position of these women in the labour market, in that often they could only maintain their financial independence in sexualised jobs where they were required to service men's

²⁶ Two of the mothers' ex-partners in this study are foreigners.

²⁷ According to Lai (2007), Eight business, or Special business, are considered being related to sex industries in the Taiwanese context, which involve certain ballrooms, dance halls, pubs, bars, tea rooms, barbers, Karaoke rooms and sauna houses. Chen (2011a), on the other hand, had reported that the women who worked in these business entered them mainly for the economic reasons. The social stigma attached to them was high, and their marriage or relationships were normally unstable.

desires. For example, Yu-mei, a 41-year-old mother with a 3-year-old son, had a relationship that lasted for more than one year and almost turned into a proper marriage and when compared to most of the mothers this duration was relatively long. Before meeting her ex-boyfriend, she was struggling with mental illness and with her employment situation. At some point, she managed to find work in a pub with more flexible working hours. Here, she elaborates on how she met her ex-boyfriend.

I met him when I suffered from severe depression. At that time, I couldn't work in a proper mind set after the depression hit me. I moved out of my family home, and I needed to pay the rent; I needed to survive. However, when I applied for normal jobs, people didn't reply at all. No reply at all from the tens of job applications I went for interviews for. In the end I ran out of ideas and became a pub barmaid who needed to accompany customers while they're drinking in pubs. (...)I met the child's father in this kind of situation.

(Yu-mei)

Financial difficulties certainly drove some of the mothers into sex-related jobs. To pull themselves out of those jobs, they began a relationship with men that had a stable income to help with their financial problems. Yu-mei admitted that she felt that *'her intentions were not pure'* in starting a relationship. It was Yu-mei's financial situation and, particularly for her, her mental state, that pressured her to seek solutions. Even at the time of being interviewed, she insisted to me that her marital expectation was still high, as in her view this was the easier option for raising a child where there are 'two pillars' within a family. After she found out that she was pregnant, Yu-mei and her ex-boyfriend even had a wedding feast²⁸. *'Yes, we did have a feast'*, she said to me. *'We had it in the 100th year'²⁹, and it was held after we knew about the pregnancy.'* After that, she moved into his flat to start their 'married' life by cohabiting together. Just like Yu-mei, many mothers in this research had moved to live with their partners either before getting pregnant or shortly

²⁸ Since 2008, a marriage can only be recognised by law when officially registered in the local Household Registration office. Before then, an informal wedding feast or ceremony with more than two witnesses was sufficient to constitute a legal marriage. According to Shao (2014), this change was made to avoid increasing numbers of illegal remarriages when the first couple had only held an informal wedding feast without too much public notice.

²⁹ The calendar of Republic of China (Taiwan). It was 2011 for the western calendar.

afterwards. Some seriously talked about getting married and put thoughts into practice, while others only adopted cohabitation as a way of taking care of each other, as they might face some obstacles in getting married. As discussed by Jung (2008) and Chang (2009), the arrangement of cohabitation in Taiwan is often underpinned by the desire for marriage. Although in some cases, cohabitation did not last, for others, the relationship was intact when they were interviewed and we can find out how they manage their lives as a single mother in a cohabiting living arrangement (discussed further in Section 5.3).

Instead of the pleasant experience of an intimate relationship, some of the mothers found out, or knew all along, that their partners were still married or in relationships with other women when they began their relationships. As mentioned by Chang (1999), ironically, it seems that Taiwanese men can still enjoy extramarital romance in this modern and monogamous world without too much criticism, as in the past they had their right to have ‘three wives and four concubines’ in the family. Regarding the female situation, Chang (ibid) also reported that affairs on women’s part have also gradually been increasing in the Taiwanese context owing to the growing awareness of their autonomy. In this research, as ‘the third parties’, Fang-ling and Ssu-yao knew that their ex-boyfriends were married before they became pregnant, while Pei-fang, Hiao-li, Chia-chia and Man-chuan were really shocked when they realised that they were literally the mistress or were sharing their partner with other women after they had found out that they were pregnant. Pei-fang, for example, told me her struggles of leaving the child’s father and also having to believe that it was the right decision (See Chapter 7 for her case). For now, her future aspiration is to raise her son well. There is no immediate hope for a future partner, as she noted,

This kind of thing is never something you can ask for and it will be given to you, so I’m not going to think so much about it. However, if there’s a guy in the future who would accept him [her son], I’d consider, otherwise I won’t seek for any relationship for the moment.

(Pei-fang)

In Pei-fang’s opinion, she strongly considered the new partner has to accept her son in the first place. However, according to Pai (2013), single parent with children is less competitive in the marriage market. If the marital expectation is still high for a single parent with children, he or she will normally reduce their standard regarding one’s age or

level of education to some point so that there will be better chance to find next partner. It shows that if Pei-fang would be interested in another relationship, there will be constraints from the marriage market waiting for her.

In Pei-fang's case, the affair ended after the truth was revealed and her lover's wife threatened her. She was confident that she would be able to afford her life with her son in the future without having too much desire to find a new partner. Ssu-yao and Hiao-li, however, continued to cohabit after they found out the truth about their ex-partners — but not without some concerns for the future. Ssu-yao, a 34-year-old mother with a one-year-old son at the time of the interview, discovered that the child's father was actually married after having been in the relationship for six months. They had been together for two years at the time of the interview, but Ssu-yao mentioned to me that the child might still be evidence of them committing the crime of adultery. She was also one of the mothers who had concerns about whether her partner would be unfaithful again. Her case is explained in more detail in Subsection 5.3.1. The effects of affairs are addressed again in the section discussing the reasons why the couples separated, which suggests that they are often potential time-bombs for relationships in the long run. It is of note that this section covers affairs from the beginning of a relationship.

Some mothers had slightly more complicated situations in terms of their relationship with the child's father, and often eagerly sought reunion with them. Although there was no difference in the way they met their partner, they might have two or three children by the same father, but have broken up in the periods between the children's births. In this sense, they knew each other for a very long period of time. Yu-chih, Hsueh-chu, Hiao-li, and Hiao-bing exemplify this. For Yu-chih and Hsueh-chu, their ages were older and their relationships were longer but with break-ups between the first and second child. As for Hiao-li and Hiao-bing, while younger comparing to the former two mothers, they remained in the relationship even after the births their third and second child, respectively, which continued to be the case when the interviews took place. To illustrate further, Hsueh-chu, a 43-year-old mother with one son aged 15 and one daughter aged 11, had both children with the same father and went back to cohabit with him for a while after her son was born (hence the second child). However, the children's father could not contribute to childrearing or provide stable financial support after their daughter was born. Hsueh-chu had to leave him for the second time. In this sense, her children would be able to keep her

surname³⁰ and she could maintain guardianship. For Hsueh-chu, the second break-up continued until she recently contemplated the possibility of a reunion. She explained the reasons as follows:

It is because I went back to find my son's biological father. And I wish we could re-establish our relationship in a good way. (...) When my son was three to four years old and we thought there would be a good possibility of reunion when we discussed it, yes, so we had our second child by accident in that situation. Yes, and then I found him still too irresponsible to bear the burden. (...) (When I moved back from Hualien) we got in contact again. After all these years, he started to feel old and saw, eh, his children are growing up. He hopes to have the children (in his life)...., wanted to rebuild the relationship.

(Hsueh-chu)

It is evidential that some of these mothers were really keen to stay with the child's father (mainly through cohabiting with them), or to reunite with him. For Hsueh-chu, she took it that the act of reunion symbolised the end of her 'disgraceful' single motherhood as well as having a better income as the child's father would be able to contribute a small amount of money to the family purse, whilst Gue-fen, a 43-year-old mother, considered that it offered a chance for her five-year-old son to have a father later in his life. In her case, her and her child's lives were supported by an uncle on her mother's side, as the child's father did not have a good economic position at the time of being interviewed³¹. For Hsueh-chu, despite the child's father strongly entreating her to reunite with him and hence have a better income, she refused to do so as she did not want to live her prospective parents-in-law

³⁰ Surnames in a paternal society such as Taiwan symbolise the belonging of the child(ren) to the family, especially the child's father's family. It was a tradition long abided to by law and not changed until very late in the Taiwanese context. According to Lin (2013), although the latest change to the Civil Code in 2007 amended and highlighted the equal rights of both parents to agree the surnames of their children, the process still follows patrilineal tradition and only one-fifth of children were given their mother's surname in 2014 (Department of Household Registration[DHR], 2015). In this study, most of the mothers' children have their mother's surnames because their parents were already separated. However, some of them were still cohabiting with the child's father when we spoke and hence, their children had the child's father's surname.

³¹ In Subsection 5.3.2.2, how her family became the key decision maker regarding the relationship is explained.

again with the pressure of having to ‘serve’ them. As mentioned in Chapter 1, daughters-in-law are normally those who take care of their parents-in-law in the Confucian context. Thus, it can be seen that, whilst reunion embodied several social-economic advantages, there were still some factors that prevented these mothers from taking this path.

In comparison to mothers with only one relationship with one man, those in this study had experienced several relationships after the first pregnancy, becoming pregnant by different men and thus, had more than one child. In this section, four of them told me how their relationships began and ended. The stories of mothers in this section are not so distinct from the mothers with one child or one relationship, except one of them became pregnant from prostitution. Like the mothers from the previous section, this group of mothers had met their ex-boyfriends through friends or through work, for example, working as pub maids. The eldest participant in this research, Su-lan, was a 46-year-old mother who had three children by her three ex-boyfriends and in an interesting example of a woman who had different children by different fathers. The children are nine and three years apart, and were all eligible for allowances. She met her first partner while working as a stripper on an electric flower car³²; her second partner while working as a pub maid; and her third partner while working at a factory. The first relationship lasted longer and nearly turned into a proper marriage, whereas the last two did not end very well. Currently, guardianship of her children belongs to her and was not given to the children’s fathers after they broke up. Here are Su-lan’s descriptions of how she met her ex-boyfriends and some of the causes of their separations:

It was because the type of the job I did that I had trouble with the child’s father’s family. They couldn’t accept... my job. (...) That’s why they couldn’t accept it. At that time, we wanted to...he said...it was when we were told we could not get married (by his family), I found out I was pregnant. During the pregnancy, I thought about it and then decided to give up (the relationship).

³² A kind of mobile performance especially held in rural Taiwan for entertaining at wedding feasts or for yearly thanksgivings to local gods. Women working on the cars normally have to host a show that includes singing and a strip dance.

His [the second child] father was... I knew him when we were in the pub [when she worked there], yes... And then he betrayed me.

And then when he [the second child's father] was gone I was in several hundred thousands of debt. (...) I realised that I couldn't be like that anymore. (...)I realised that...no worries, actually I don't need to depend on men, so I went on to be hired by a local factory for a job. My salary was deducted by a certain amount for the debt every month. I had to return the money gradually. And because of that, I met my youngest daughter's father in that factory. Yes, but oh, he was a useless man.

(Su-lan)

She was relying on benefits from both the Act of Assistance for Family in Hardship (AFH) and NGOs and could only take a part-time job with a very small income, as she had to take care of often ill youngest daughter. Three of her relationships represent typical examples of how culture, family and women's financial disadvantage interplay when there is an unexpected pregnancy for an unmarried woman. After three times trying, Su-lan told me that, *'Men! That is enough relationships for me! (...)My current thought is to take care of my children well and nothing else!'*. She was refusing to take up opportunities to meet men despite her friends being eager to introduce her to potential new partners. Similar to her, three other mothers with second relationships and a second child conveyed the reflexive idea of avoiding any relationship and instead, concentrated on childrearing. However, these mothers can also be seen as mirrors that reflect the future of the mothers who have only one child from one man. This means that it was not impossible that the mothers with only one relationship before being interviewed would develop another relationship with another man in the future and remain unmarried. This was indeed happening in two of the mothers' cases, who reported they had new partners when being interviewed and several others were actively looking for future relationships. This is in line with Kuo (2012) finding with regards to the intention of remarriage among single parents, who elicited that many wanted to re-partner in the long run but not in the near future.

Kuo (2012) also pointed out that in Chinese culture, remarriage or re-partnering is actually against the norm, in particular, when it happens to women who have become divorced. In fact, the remarriage rate of men is substantially higher than that of women (see Figure 2.5), being more acceptable and hence, actively encouraged. In Ching-hua's case, who was a

38-year-old mother with two daughters aged 16 and three by different fathers, she did not want people to know this and so, instead of seeking a new partner, she concentrated on the welfare of her children (see more detail about Ching-hua in Chapter 7). Whilst they are not married, re-partnering still exerted certain level of influence on them as they were mothers with children, resulting in the generating some stigma management strategies such as 'passing', which will be discussed more in the next chapter. It seems they did have freedom of choice when entering a new relationship, which was in contrast to the general perspective that women with children are 'less wanted' by men (Pai, 2013). However, whether this constitutes a real sign of individualisation among these mothers is questionable, for it would appear that the main reason that they might seek a relationship was for economic support, such as in Yu-mei's case. Alternatively, it could be underpinned by the social purpose of 'fitting in' with society again through participation in the institution of marriage and thus, a two-parent family, such as in Hsueh-chu and Gue-fen's cases.

Finally, in contrast to the majority of the mothers, the case of Mei-lan, a 37-year-old mother, is unique. She has a daughter and a son four years apart, each with a different man. In this research, she is the only example of a never-married single mother who felt no other choice than to work as a prostitute because of her personal financial situation. While she was working as a prostitute, she accidentally got pregnant twice and she had to stop the prostitution work. Her children were the results of these two accidental pregnancies. During the interview, she explained that when she began working as a prostitute

...they [the friends who lent her money] said they wanted to clear this debt as quickly as possible. (...) It was 350 thousand (NTD) in total. I said, wow, even if I did two jobs, for example if I earned 29 thousand for a month, you would have taken 19 thousand and left me with 10 thousand. (...) (If we've done so,) we could clear our debt fully after a year. That was a very quick way to return money. However, I didn't choose that way, I choose to step into the business of prostitution. I didn't tell you about this at the beginning.

(Mei-lan)

After examining the various ways that these mothers commenced their relationships, a path to understanding them in depth appears to be unfolding in front of us. As to signs of

individualisation, although nuanced, they might have embarked on their relationship like any other couple might, such as through an introduction by a friend. In addition, they might have believed it was acceptable to cohabit together and to engage in sexual behaviour, which resulted in a planned or accidental pregnancy. However, it seems their unequal position when beginning the relationship (i.e. through infidelity or sex-related work) and subsequent economic and social disadvantages after becoming a never-married mother soon after, signalled that they would be prepared to enter another questionable relationship so as to have a man who would help them to manage these disadvantages, even though several of them replied with a low intention to find another partner in the near future. So, it would appear that any signs of individualisation for these women could have just been a smoke screen masking their disadvantaged economic and social reality. In the next section, the surprising point of their life – finding out they were pregnant – will be considered in order to reveal the very first decision-making moment of their journey towards becoming a mother.

5.2 A time of panic or surprise: finding out about a pregnancy

After exploring how the mothers in this research began their relationships with their children's father, it is now important to look at the point when they found out they were pregnant. According to Gung (2008), when a Taiwanese woman realises she is accidentally pregnant, it is very common she looks for advice from her partner first. They desperately want to make sure whether their partner will accept the pregnancy or not, as it is related to their future aspiration of getting married. Most of the mothers in the research told the child's father immediately. Most of the mothers received promises of continuing the relationships and raising the children together, whilst the others broke up right away, as these mothers did not agree with their partners' suggestion of having an abortion. In this section the mothers' decisions, made with or without their partners, and the reasons behind their decision-making at this point of their life, are scrutinised.

Here are two examples that represent some relationships could be maintained and some could not be at this point. Jo-yu, a 37-year-old mother with a son aged two months, was one of the cases whose partner was more eager to have a child more than she was. When the question of her partner's reaction to the pregnancy was raised, she said, *'He [her partner] wanted a child for a long time. I was not so much into it as him.'* Although some

conflicts came up after she delivered her son, they were still cohabiting together and supported each other. As a contrasting example, Wei-chen was more of an ‘unfortunate’ story, as her ex-boyfriend not only refused to help, but also disappeared after admitting he had no money to raise the child. She describes the situation when they discussed the future of this child and how dramatically her ex-boyfriend responded:

Actually the pregnancy crushed all the affection. (...) It was so dramatic. He kneeled down alongside the main road and begged me to let him go. And I thought, “Oh God, I was like a heroine in films!” [laughs] He thought I made him feel disgraced and that he had no choice. (...) And he was really naive at that time. He wanted me to have an abortion and we could wait for an opportunity to get married.

(Wei-chen, a 34-year-old mother with a two-month-old son)

It is of note that, like Wei-chen, even though their partners agreed to support the mothers when they were first told of the pregnancy, some of them attempted to convince these mothers to have an abortion. Hiao-bing, a 19-year-old mother with two children aged one and two months, offered an example of this situation and strongly showed her opinion of keeping the child:

He was quite excited when I got pregnant for the first time, but not the second time. [laughs] (...) He thought about me having an abortion, too. But I don’t want to, so he could only... (accept it) [laughs].

(Hiao-bing)

Similar to Hiao-bing and Jo-yu, three other mothers were still in a relationship and were cohabiting with the child’s father at the time of being interviewed³³. As mentioned, they are the ones whose partners supported them throughout the duration of childbearing and childrearing. In contrast to them, among mothers who reached an agreement with their partner at the beginning, most of the cases ended up separating. The factors that led

³³ None of the mothers in this study were still in a relationship and living apart. Once they left the ex-partners, they did not live together again. However, while they were still together, they were more likely to cohabit with each other.

mothers to break up after they agreed to raise the child together, along with the reasons for staying together while not married will be further discussed in the next section.

It is of note that, amongst mothers who sought support from their partner and ‘got accepted’ at the beginning of their pregnancy, some of mothers also considered the choice of having abortion on their own without letting their partner know in the first place. Here, Chia-chia, a 24-year-old mother with a one-year-old son, talks about her consideration at the beginning and she did not seek the child’s father’s agreement.

At the beginning, I wanted to have an abortion. (...) My first thought was I couldn’t afford it. It’s mainly because of the financial issues. (...) And the child’s father also agreed with me having an abortion. I didn’t ask for his agreement first. It was me who wanted to have an abortion. I went to a gynaecologist clinic by myself, I only asked some friends of mine to accompany me after making up my mind to have an abortion.

(Chia-chia)

In some other cases, the mothers realised quickly the child’s father would not help them or continue the relationship. In particular, three of the mothers had already broken up with their ex-partners when they found out that they were pregnant. It was their first thought that ‘I want to have an abortion’. Also, even if they changed their mind later, the choice was often their own, whether the child’s father would accept it or not. Hiao-ting, a 27-year-old mother with a seven-year-old son, said that their first thought was to have an abortion when she knew that she was pregnant: *the gynaecologist said, “Oh, you got pregnant.” And I said, “Really? Can I have an abortion?”* In Hiao-ting’s case, she could not have an abortion, because she was already eight-months pregnant when she found out. According to Article 15 of the Enforcement Rules of Genetic Health Act (GHA) (2012) in Taiwan, it is illegal for an abortion to be carried out after six months of pregnancy. It was more like an accident that she could only give birth to the child and think about the next step afterwards.

From the above examples, it’s not hard to discern that abortion is actually a very common way to deal with accidental pregnancy in the Taiwanese context. It is currently legal to have an abortion when a mother feels it is ‘needed’ given her situation, and it is

particularly common when an unwed mother finds she is pregnant in order to avoid stigma (Wang, 2012). Nevertheless many women are still wracked with self-condemnation and guilt, if they seek an abortion after getting pregnant (Lin, 2008b; Mei, 2010). Despite these considerations, the data reveal various reasons why these mothers chose not to have an abortion at this point in their decision-making process, regardless of their relational status. For some of the cases, when they had experienced that their child had started its life as a foetus while having an ultrasound examination, they gave up their thoughts of having an abortion. Chia-chia, who was going to have an abortion, describes her experience of facing an abortion when she realised the child had a heartbeat and of how having an abortion might affect her.

I went (to the gynaecologist clinic) for an abortion. The doctor did the check up again and he had a heartbeat already. (...) I couldn't bear the sound of the heartbeat. I was also afraid of the process of abortion. (...) There were two alternatives at that moment: continue the pregnancy or have an abortion. I knew I would feel guilty for all the rest of my life, so I gave up on the abortion and decided to give birth to him.

(Chia-chia)

It is of note that, attitudes towards the taking of life are also related to some of the traditional religions in the Taiwanese context. As Sung (2005) and Mei (2010) pointed out in their findings in relation to the effects of Buddhism on decision-making about having an abortion, some of the mothers who faced this dilemma were frightened that the spirit of their child³⁴ would follow them after the operation. After knowing the child's father had refused to see her after knowing she was pregnant, Fang-ling decided to keep the child out of fear. She told me in her account regarding her decisions about childbearing.

³⁴ According to Wu (2010), the Japanese Buddhist belief is that having an abortion is akin to the sin of murder. The process of worshipping and memorising the aborted infant is considered to help the transmigration of its soul. As Taiwan was colonised by Japan for 50 years and has a close relationship in terms of cultural exchange with the latter, the concept of worshipping an aborted infant was introduced to Taiwanese women when the programme of the 'Family Plan' was implemented in the 1970s. It not only became a way for a mother to memorialise her lost baby, but also a way to redeem the mother's sin for having taken a life.

Because I heard from other people that when you kill an infant, the infant's spirit will come to you. I also believe it is a life. I don't think it's okay (to take away her life), so I decided to keep her.

(Fang-ling)

In a more positive perspective, some of the mothers in this research considered protecting their children's lives as their responsibility at the stage when they were refused by the child's father because they were the creators. Ya-hsin, Ching-ching and Shui-lien shared the view that it was their duty to shoulder the burden of childrearing. Shui-lien, a 41-year-old mother with a two-year-old daughter, left the child's father because he refused to share the childrearing costs. Here is Shui-lien's narrative, reporting her increasing sense of responsibility as she was getting older.

If you said we're seventeen or eighteen years old, we might have stupid thoughts. If I was (pregnant) in my twenties, I would have had an abortion. (...) However, look at my age, why can't I be responsible for what I've done? How can I choose to take away a life?

(Shui-lien)

Shui-lien's emphasis on the issue of responsibility stands starkly in contrast to the reaction of the child's father. In fact, 'taking responsibility' emerged as a value that most of the older mothers strongly held. What is mentioned above has covered these mothers' perspectives while they were deciding the fate of their child through their value of life and their own sense of responsibility. Moreover, drawing on Shui-lien's considerations of her age, she also told of her concerns when she had to give up having a child at her age.

I gave birth to her because I felt I was too old. I'm 41 years old, and if I didn't give birth (to my daughter), there might be less chance for me to give birth in the future. (...) I was literally a woman being pregnant at an advanced maternal age! Literally! [laughs]

(Shui-lien, 38 years old when pregnant)

Therefore, age can also be a powerful reason that mothers in this research to give birth to their children when they were given a chance to decide their own fate. Their considerations

are consistent with those mentioned by Linn (1991) in her findings regarding unwed mothers in Israel. She researched women who were older and expected to become mothers at some point in their lives, but could not get married due to their careers or unsuccessful relationship experiences, who would try to break with the tradition of 'getting married then giving birth' and get pregnant while they still could. Their getting pregnant outside of wedlock meant facing the consequences of being a single mother in a traditional religious society where marriage is the main form of relationship between men and women. However, the irreversible biological clock appears to have created a morally-acceptable space for some Israeli women that has meant they feel it is acceptable to raise children on their own. Like these Israeli women, mothers in this research seems to apply similar moral rules to their decision to become a unwed mother

Similar to the worries of being too old to give birth, some mothers talked about their difficulties in conceiving and were very careful about their health after finding out that they were pregnant. As a case of this, Jo-yu told me, *'when I knew I was pregnant, I stopped drinking something which was helping to adjust my health so my baby would not be affected.'* Pei-ti, on the other hand, had had an abortion before with the same partner and thus was keen to keep the second child. However, this decision was rejected by her partner and at around three-months pregnant, she decided to break up with him and keep her son as her own. In contrast to the mothers who had a formal established relationship, two mothers became pregnant due to a short physical relationship. By their own accounts, their relationships did not exist and thus, there were no arguments or relational issues to deal with when they found out about their pregnancy. In Mei-lan's case, as mentioned, a relationship with her child's father did not exist as she had been working as a prostitute. She found she was pregnant and was unwilling to have an abortion, as she thought the child was not responsible for her situation. Furthermore, she worried about the child's future in an adopted family when she was given an advice to give the child away.

The reason, hmmm, it was like I couldn't bear it. I feel the children are innocent. Although I was a bit brutal when I told them off, saying 'eh, I don't want you and I want to give you away to others'. But when your children are crying, you'll definitely feel you couldn't bear it. Your heart hurts. Yes. Or, if you give your children away for adoption, they won't treat them as well as we do. The "well" doesn't mean materially well, no, it means you really love them. There's no way like this. And once

you have given them away, you can't ask about how the new family treats them. You don't know where they are either.

(Mei-lan)

Therefore, it seems that for the mothers in this research, the decision to keep the child was also highly based on their past experience of having had an abortion or difficulties in conceiving a baby and factors such as age. Regarding such concerns, some of the mothers were more inclined to keep the unborn child even if they did not receive a positive response from the child's father. What is of note is, these considerations have shown that there was no absolute right or wrong in their decision, but rather, a process of them negotiating with their values and beliefs. Whilst the choices needed to be made were different, this still aligned with the concept of 'gendered moral rationalities', which Duncan and Edwards (1999) addressed, whereby many of these mothers' decision in regard to having their children was influenced by the values generated in the Taiwanese context, in particular, the fear of having an abortion and the strong desire for motherhood. Eventually, although some of the mothers considered having an abortion or giving the baby up for adoption, it was not their decision at the point of finding out about the pregnancy. They chose to continue the pregnancy and sought more support or 'guidance' in order to cope with an unknown future. In the next section, the second stage of decision-making for these mothers will be further probed through the status of their relationship after they decided to keep the child.

5.3 Working it out: staying together or breaking up

No matter what the different routes that the mothers in this study took to enter into single motherhood, either by deciding with their partners or by deciding by themselves, they all end up in a position of not married to the child's father. This section thus focuses on how the decision whether to separate or not was made as well as on the forms of conflict experienced throughout the relationship. In particular, the decision-making process discussed in this section shows how many of these women were forced to make the decision not to marry owing to circumstances beyond their control, given that in particular they were constrained by being situated in a Confucian context which exerts a great influence. However, alternative factors are explored in this context to identify any signs of individualisation amongst these mothers.

The participants are divided into two groups according to their relational status when they were interviewed. The first group consists of five mothers who were still cohabiting with their partners when we spoke. The partners provided a certain amount of help in these mothers' daily lives. The second group of mothers is the largest group in the cohort, comprising 25 who had broken up with their partners in their lives for single or, more often, multiple reasons, even though they promised to raise their children together. These two groups of mothers serve as the categories for examining how their relationships develop and end.

5.3.1 The relationships which remained

Having met the fathers of their children through friends or at work, the mothers in this section started their relationship not just because of an unplanned pregnancy, but also with the intention to maintain it. As mentioned in Section 5.2, five mothers in this study were cohabiting with their partners when we spoke. It should be noted that these mothers are normally considered as single in the Taiwanese context, not being counted as a separate category in the official statistics (Yang, 2004, 2014). Moreover, cohabitation is still taken as being a part of process in which a couple will get married in the future (Chang, 2009; Jung, 2008). Although not as problematic as before, such mothers still have to hide the fact that they are cohabiting from their relatives so as to avoid the pressure of being told to get married (Wu, 2004a). This subsection focuses on their perspectives about being together outside of marriage, and the type of conflicts which could potentially affect their relationships in the future.

As mentioned in Section 5.1, some cohabiting couples faced serious obstacles and thus could not fulfil their goal of getting married immediately. For the mothers in the research, the obstacles were mostly financial matters, which concurs with much of the literature discussing the motivations for cohabiting couples to get married (Lichter et al., 2006; Smock et al., 2005). For example, despite Ssu-yao having a high expectation of being a mother or getting married, the debts she and her partner both had were a critical issue that was discouraging them from doing so. However, it was beneficial for her to cohabit, as her partner could also contribute his part, in terms of his income and physical input towards the childrearing.

In Hiao-bing's case, as it was still difficult raising two children with a small amount of money, Hiao-bing was planning to work when her children grow older. As a 19-year-old mother, the intention of getting married was not on her mind at the moment. Apart from money and age issues, she was hesitant about getting married due to the attitude of the child's father and his family. Hiao-bing talks of her concern about losing her freedom in the future, if she actually married her children's father as follows:

I feel if I get married I'll be tied. I've already been tied even though I haven't got married. I have to tell my mother-in-law before I want to go out. I have to ask her whether I can go out or not. If she says no, I really can't go out. Because my mother-in-law does not want to help us with too much care work. She asks us to deal with it on our own. [laughs]

(Hiao-bing)

From her account, we see that she had to negotiate with her mother-in-law over childcare arrangements even though she had promised to share the burden. This process obviously put her off from entering marriage. Jo-yu, faced a similar problem as Hiao-bing with her child's father and his family, but was much more offended by their attitudes. As one of the cohabiting couples who wished to get married in the future, she expected that her partner and his family would show respect to her and her family and that they would get married in the traditional way – with an official agreement between the two families arranged by a matchmaker³⁵. However, she was greatly disappointed by the attitudes they displayed in one of their family meetings. She tells me that:

Because his family gave me a feeling that they only wanted the child not me. Then how can it be possible (that I get married with you)? My child is from me and there's no way that he has to have your surname. I'm the one who gave birth to him, ok? You didn't want to get married with me and I have to beg you to get married with me? Can you reason with that? I'm a woman!

(Jo-yu)

³⁵ A traditional marriage proposal in Taiwan normally takes place before the wedding feast and ceremony. The presence of a matchmaker, whether a real or symbolic, is necessary. Also, some valuable gifts are given by the groom as part of the proposal.

She and her family felt really offended and she was actually considering whether to leave her partner for good when we spoke. Yu-chih was an example of having separated before finally being reunited with her partner. Also, closely resembling Jo-yu's experience, she had an argument with the child's father about the child's surname even though they did not get married, which shows how this can be used as a tool of power to make claims on the child's parenthood, by both the mother and the father. She was abandoned by her partner once as they could not agree with each other whether she should work or not after getting married. This separation affected her decisions regarding their children's surnames and her desire to get married in the future. Although her partner eventually relented and reunited with Yu-chih, she decided her son should keep her surname as she was concerned that her partner might change his mind again. Here, she provides her narrative about her reasons for not getting married and her decision to give her second child his surname.

He behaved very well for two years after he came to see me again. [laughs], so I said I can have another child with you and give your surname to her, but I'd like to keep my surname for my son. Otherwise it would be too horrible if you regret again. And he agreed. (...) but I still don't want to marry him because he has done this once. I don't know whether he is going to do this again or not. So I wouldn't dare (to get married).

(Yu-chih, 37, with a seven-year-old son and a four-year-old daughter)

In comparison to the mothers who received some help from the child's father or his family, Hiao-li, a 25-year-old mother with three daughters aged four, three, and one, was in a more difficult situation, since her partner was in jail when she was interviewed. She was only earning very little money as a cleaner for raising her three daughters. Until her partner came out of the jail, she was having to depend heavily on benefits or charity for housing and nursery fees, as her family refused to help her in case she depended on them too much. Although her prospective parents-in-law could offer some practical childcare help and she visited them every day as a dutiful future daughter-in-law, she still worried about her future because she wondered whether her partner would be a trustworthy husband or not. She said, '*his eyes have a power of electricity*', when she told me her concern regarding the future with her boyfriend. She had found out that he was actually very fond of women and

was still in contact with some of his ex-girlfriends. As a consequence, it appears likely that the possibility of marriage would have diminished after his release from jail.

So far, we can see these cohabiting mothers had various reasons for not getting married, which can be grouped according to the source of the problem – either the couple themselves or outside pressures, such as from the family. Issues that occurred between couples included lack of money or cohabitees' affairs, as Ssu-yao and Hiao-li encountered. Whilst in Yu-chih's case, they could not agree on whether they should both work for their living expenses when they were planning for getting married. These all very much align with what has been mentioned by Gibson-Davis et al. (2005), regarding the reasons of cohabitation – financial barriers and relational issues. In terms of pressure from the couples' families, Jo-yu, Hiao-bing and Hiao-li, for example, were mothers who had to deal with their partner's family or their own family, in order to get married. If they could not agree with the opinions of their prospective in-laws in terms of childcare or children's surnames they might simply consider finishing their relationship like Jo-yu had been pondering doing. In this regard, we can see cohabitation actually provided them an area to buffer or avoid the conflicts. That is, mothers could actually choose not to get married when the soon-to-be parent-in-laws or husbands were not so suitable. However, we must not overlook that this was originally happening while they were looking to get married in the future. Based on the observations above, in the next subsection, the reasons these relationships failed and the influence of the families in this matter are probed further.

5.3.2 The relationship that broke up

For mothers in this subsection, no matter how they met their partners or how long they remained in their relationships after being accepted after the news of pregnancy, things came to an end at some point. The reasons for separation and the conflicts in relation to separation are explored in this subsection. In relation to categorising the reasons, three roles were identified in the previous subsection as the causes of conflict: the ex-partners, or the child(ren)'s fathers, whose behaviour or economic status was believed to have worsened the quality of their relationships; the family, either the mother's family or their ex-partner's, who tried to interfere in the couples' decision-making from outside; and never-married mothers themselves who exercised their autonomy to decide whether to leave an unpleasant relationship or not.

5.3.2.1 *Issues of ex-partners*

In this research, the most common reason for leaving their partners after they found out they were pregnant is related to the relationship itself when one of the pair was being unfaithful. Two kinds of affairs emerged in this study. One is where the ex-boyfriend was having an affair with the focal mother, whilst the other is where he had an affair with another woman while in a relationship with one of the mothers in the research. The latter is one of the main causes of these mothers' broken-up relationships and is covered in this subsection. For these mothers, the relationship ended because their ex-boyfriends had simply disappeared and lost contact, or had started living with another woman.

What is notable is that the instances of infidelity reported in this research were all instigated by men. During the interviews, it was revealed that some of those who had affairs were not told by their lover that he was married and only found out when they became pregnant, which demonstrates that some Taiwanese men continue to exercise their power in manipulating the supposedly equal relationship in modern society. Also, it should be noted that most of these relationships did not last long due to unfaithfulness. Even though the mothers tried to maintain the relationship with the child's father, they struggled. Chih-yun's story is one example where this happened. She separated from the child's father for half a year because he was having an affair. Later on, when he came back and claimed that she was his real love, she changed her mind and resumed her relationship with him. Soon afterwards, she discovered that the child's father was still with his mistress and was not committed to marrying Chih-yun or sharing the burden of childrearing. Here, she talks about their relationship.

To be honest, if I simplify it, we were always in this triangular kind of relationship. During these six years, there was another woman, and she has a child, too. She is like me, has a child but was not married. (...) We were in a terrible balance of "knowing that the other woman is existing", and nobody wanted to walk away. (...) To be honest we wanted to leave. However, when we wanted to go he would come and pull you back, until the string on you was tight. And while the other string was loose, he would turn to pull the other one. It went on and on like that.

(Chih-yun, 31, with a two- year-old son)

From their experience, we can see how relationships can be prescribed by men in the Taiwanese context. This accords with the findings of Chen (2003) and Cheng (2010), who elicited that the attachment of women to men is still significant, with mothers wanting to have a child in order to keep the men they had a relationship with. Women like Chih-yun had to suffer, realising that the relationship would not work for them in the current circumstances and thus, were subsequently forced to learn to be independent later on. At the time of being interviewed, Chih-yun had recently decided to leave the relationship with the father, had found a job and was developing a new relationship with another man. However, she admitted to me that she was not anticipating marriage given her previous experience and in any case, the family of her current boyfriend was a major obstacle to them getting wed.

Similar to the cohabiting couples, a second common reason for couples separating was related to their finances. Several others in this study had to deal with financial issues with their partners when they found out they were pregnant. Including Wei-chen as mentioned in Section 5.2, most of them had to end the relationship immediately. Others struggled for a while but had to accept the fact that their partners were financially too constrained to help their children. Yue-shia, a 37-year-old mother with a three-year-old daughter, took a longer time to consider the situation before deciding to give up on it. She had had a six-year relationship with her ex-boyfriend and had planned to get married after the baby was born. However, his business failed suddenly and meanwhile, Yue-shia gradually found out he was actually with someone else. After thirteen months of deliberation, she decided not to continue the relationship given that her ex-boyfriend was not willing to give her any definite answer regarding getting married or leaving the other woman. Her decision was to leave and raise her daughter on her own³⁶.

Another situation mothers can encounter in their relationships is that of violence. Regarding some of the mothers, when the amount of conflict increased, there were incidents of domestic violence, which caused the relationship to end. Also, some of them had met their partners when working as barmaids and the men were actually very addicted to alcohol, which sometimes brought not only violence but also arguments about money or responsibility for childcare when they were really drunk. Yu-mei, as mentioned in Section

³⁶ Her case will be further studied in Chapter 7 as an example of Taiwanese women's disadvantaged situation in the labour market and with regard to childcare choices.

5.1 regarding how she met her ex-partner, who was very fond of drinking. After she became pregnant, his drinking problem got worse and he turned to violence. However, Yu-mei wished her ex-partner would share the burden of childcare with her after the child was born as she was still suffering from depression, but his drinking made this nearly impossible. One night, there was a violent clash with her partner after he drank too much, so Yu-mei was forced to move out of the apartment she shared with him and end the relationship.

As reported in the subsections so far regarding these mothers' ex-partners, I often heard the word 'responsibility' or similar expressions from the mothers when the conversation turned to the issue of the child's father. When talking about this, they were referring to his duty to not only to stay in the relationship, but also to provide financial help and childcare support. This closely resembles Peng's (1997) observation of there being a pattern among Japanese single mothers who choose to separate from or divorce their husbands, even though Japan is a typical male-breadwinner society and they might risk experiencing shame following the decision. According to these Japanese single mothers, a husband or male partner should be the main finance provider in the relationship for their wives and children, for these duties qualify, to them, as the behaviour of a real man. Similarly, in this study, if their ex-partners' did not fulfil their duty, like the Japanese single mothers, they prefer separation as a solution to their problems. Thus, it would appear that the cultural stance on gendered roles in childcare helped to forge in many of the focal women the ideal family as having a man and women playing out their set roles whilst raising children, thereby accepting their assigned responsibilities. It is of note that, with most of the mothers adopting this position, this also meant that when having to raise children on their own, they did not consider the state as being responsible for their welfare.

Apart from the mothers themselves seeing their ex-partner as problematic, another relationship has an influence on the couple – their relationship with their families. In the following subsections, issues generated by the family will be explored further.

5.3.2.2 Issues of family involvement

In addition to the situations described above where the mothers considered their ex-partners as unsuitable, their family and the family of their partners could generate conflict by interfering in their relationships. In some cases, it was the child's father's

family, especially their mothers³⁷, who were not satisfied with this mother, the father's mother would urge him to leave her despite the couple's decision to be together. In other cases, it was their own family who could not accept the child's father, either because they were concerned about his ability to provide for the family or because of his inadequate behaviour as a man. The expectation for men and women to hold particular roles in Taiwanese society, including the pressure and control exerted by the family in this area is discussed in this subsection.

It is actually not surprising that mothers in this research encountering issues with their future family-in-laws. According to Li (2002), problems between the daughters-in-law and parents-in-law are commonplace among married families in Taiwan. Shu-fen, a 42-year-old mother with a 16-year-old son, encountered the situation of having a dissatisfied mother-in-law. She was cohabiting with her ex-partner and his whole family while she was pregnant. As a soon-to-be daughter-in-law, she had to deal with the housework on her own after she came back from work. She explains how they cohabited with each other, the reason why they separated, and some of her reflections about the decisions made at that time.

My cohabitation with the child's father was agreed by his parents. Actually, we lived with his family, for the sake of getting married. And it turned out that his mother told us not to get married in the end. (...) I was nearly getting too depressed because my sister-in-law was making up rumours. Rumours about not doing any house chores and it was her did all the work. (...) (She said) don't get married. If you don't sort out the house chores now, you wouldn't do anything after you got married.

(Shu-fen)

In the end, her ex-partner believed the rumours and never came back to her. Compared with Shu-fen, who was asked to separate from her ex-partner, some mothers encountered more hidden or even entirely humiliating circumstances when they met their partner's family. Regarding the latter, Ching-ching received even harsher comments when meeting

³⁷ According to Wolf (1972), Taiwanese mothers-in-laws in the 1950s tended to have complete authority over their daughter-in-laws in terms of managing house chores and caring work within the household. It was very common that a mother-in-law would interfere in a daughter-in-law's daily domestic labour to 'make things right'.

her second son's father's family during the reunion dinner on Chinese New Year's Eve. She recalled that during this family gathering, her prospective mother-in-law doubted whether the child was the ex-boyfriend's, saying, *'this child doesn't look like you at all. This is not your son.'* and he asked her to leave without defending her at all. The reproach of the child's father's family brings up another issue that these mothers might need to deal with – they can be seen as women who are not faithful in a relationship. Whilst Ching-ching left her child's father because of his lack of commitment, she was also embarrassed by his family judging her as to whether she was a good woman or not.

In contrast to those mothers who had issues with their partner's family, Gue-fen had to leave her ex-boyfriend because of the opinions of her family. They were not impressed by his image, saying, *'He looks like a homeless person. Has he got any money? It's a lie.'* They also worried about his ability to take care of her and the child since he used to be in jail and was unemployed while she was pregnant. She admitted herself that the child's father was actually *'not from the same circle like my family'*, which made the relationship even harder to sustain. However, she had conveyed her thoughts to her family regarding how to find a position in her son's life for the child's father, despite there no longer being any affection between the couple. Recently her family had become aware that the child's father was from a wealthy family and so they had been encouraging her to re-establish the relationship.

Shu-fen and Ching-ching's stories certainly show the power of the child's father's family to influence the decision whether to be in the relationship or not. In particular, their influence on the new born child could determine its surname, guardianship, or the way the mothers taking care of the baby. This inevitably caused conflict throughout the whole relationship and was often the catalyst that to these focal mothers reconsidering the possibility of marriage in the future. Here, Ssu-ting talks about how their ex-partner's family became involved in the issue of whom the child belongs to.

They were so unhappy about why my surname was given to the child. And then I said, 'If we got married, we'll let him have your surname'. The point is, since then we haven't got married yet and of course that's why the child still keeps my name. (...) Plus, you [the child's father's family] are not sharing any fees or living expenditure for raising this kid.

(Ssu-ting, 30, a treasurer, with a four-year-old son)

Ssu-ting is one of the mothers who were able to decide where this child should go and were only willing to give up guardianship of the child if they were properly married or their ex-boyfriend made an adequate financial provision.

As has been seen so far from the discussion about the family's involvement in these mothers' relationships, two issues stand out, firstly, it appears to be inevitable that the family is part of a couple's relationship in the Taiwanese context. The families of these mothers or their partners acted as judges towards them in terms of whether they were suitable for acceptance into each other's family. This echoes with what was mentioned in Chapter 1, whereby when a woman is married and becomes part of a child's father's family, they have to obey its conventions, which invariably involves a hierarchical arrangement and gender division. Secondly, in order to defend their own interests, i.e. having an heir for the future, they took no account of these mothers' needs, such as their being officially married. Along with irresponsible ex-partners, the existence of family involvement within the relationship would appear to apply more pressure on this relationship when there is a Confucian context as compared with western settings. From the perspective of their families, whether the couple was 'good enough' to act the role as a man/father or as a woman/mother was pivotal for the continuing of the relationship. However, some of the mothers in the study tended to reject the idea of letting the child have their child's father's surname, i.e. letting the child belong to the child's father, as they were dissatisfied with his involvement in the childcare arrangements or his financial contributions. This indicates how these mothers rebelled against the power exercised by the father's family, thereby exhibiting some signs of individualisation.

5.3.2.3 Mothers with their own reflections on the relationship

In comparison to mothers whose relationships were greatly affected by family or other situations which happened without any choice, three mothers in this research experienced a relatively autonomous role when they finally separated from their ex-partners. Ya-hsin, Ren-fon, Ssu-ting and Ching-ching were the ones who had a say in their relationships, or were free to decide to leave without coming back when there were serious arguments and thus, could be considered examples of women who have become individualised as they do not pay attention to any family pressure. When Ching-ching met her first child's father, she

was one of the examples of this type of woman. She showed clearer intentions than the other mothers to not get married when she knew about her first pregnancy and broke up with the child's father almost 20 years ago. She explains her struggle at that time:

We didn't grow up in a healthy family you know. Sometimes when we saw other people's families were complete and functional, so we envied them and we started to look down to ourselves. I felt it's so difficult to get close to this kind of family. Maybe in their opinions it is an easy thing to deal with. However, I know in corner of my heart I long for a family, because of what happened it is somewhere I wouldn't dare to step into. Even though my perspective in-laws were really kind, in my heart I couldn't feel totally secure, or I could really do a good job about it or something like that. So...I reckon this word 'marriage' as something I will never experience. Even though at that time the ex-partner's family proposed and talked about it with us, I didn't want to do it [getting married]. I was scared of it.

(Ching-ching)

Since then, she had been able to bring up her son effectively on her own as she had her own business at that time. Despite having had several relationships afterwards, she never felt it was necessary to get married. However, the most interesting part of her story is that she tried to begin family life with her second son's father at a time when she was not so financially capable, but this failed in the end as he was not very responsible in terms of financial support. Hence, it can be seen that it was not a fixed thought in Ching-ching's mind that she would never marry. As what was mentioned in Section 5.1, Kuo (2012) reported that a single parent's attitude to remarriage can change in the long run in that when the time and the person is right, a woman might make up her mind to do so. The effects of financial constraints are often considered as the incentive which leads to some mothers becoming involved with a man so that he will provide for her and her children (de Graaf & Kalmijn, 2003; Dewilde & Uunk, 2008). In Ching-ching's case, she thought the second partner could be her future husband to lean on, but when the financial support disappeared, it proved difficult to remain in the relationship. This situation aligns with what Kuo (ibid) identified, whereby the financial disadvantaged position would actually generate both pull and push effects. That is, the mother is pulled in the direction of re-partnering and pushed away from maintaining a stable relationship owing to financially

insecurity. This dilemma facing such women demonstrates how they will be disadvantaged in the future, if they choose to participate in the competition of the marriage market, when compared to others.

In this section, the reasons why the mothers were judged and why the relationship with their children's father ended or never began have been examined. In the next section, the reasons why they made their decision to keep their children and not have an abortion or give the child up for adoption will be explored.

5.4 Weighing up to the final decision: single motherhood

After the being turned down or accepted by the child's father and the interaction with the child's father's family, these mothers' relational status had reached a stable point when they were interviewed. According to Cheng (2010), in her study of adult never-married single mothers in Taiwan, each had to weigh up the pros and cons before becoming one. This included considering what they really wanted for their lives and what resources they could utilise to lower the cost of the decision in the future. In this section, the reasons for keeping the child despite not being married and being separated from the child's father will be discussed again. Specifically, their considerations of ensuring external support and inner capability, as well as choosing to become mothers even when the consequences could be severe will also be highlighted.

5.4.1 Capability of affording the life of two

As mentioned, in some cases, the mothers were expecting to get married or at least maintain the relationship in the beginning and so discussed their pregnancies with their partners, both agreeing that the child would be taken care of jointly after childbirth. However, they broke up due to the scenarios presented in the previous section, such as the partners' affairs or irresponsibility. Considering whether they would be able to support their children by themselves, mothers in this research assessed whether they could manage their financial situations and childcare needs before giving birth, which led to having abortions being among their considerations. For example, in Hui-chiao's case, she wanted to have an abortion due to economic issues and her doubts about her boyfriend. However, she believed the promise made by him and so, remained pregnant, but was subsequently abandoned after coming back to Taiwan having been living abroad. It was also another

example of where it was ‘too late’ for her to have an abortion and an example of the status of the relationship could affect the decision to have an abortion.

In the end, you know, because foreigners³⁸ are more against the idea of having abortions in general. But Asian people feel much more okay with it because if we couldn’t afford it or so. But the foreigners might not accept this. He felt I was going to harm a life and then he asked me why I was going to murder my own child?

(Hui-chiao, 28, with a son aged two months)

Although Hui-chiao intended to have an abortion because she could not afford the life with a child, she told me in her interview that she was actually happy with the decision to keep her son, as all of her family, including of course herself, love the child very much. In her case, she could only engage in some part-time work in her former working place and run a small business on the Internet when her two-month-old son needed her care. Furthermore, she pointed out the difference in attitudes to abortion between the East and the West. As researched by Hertog and Iwasawa (2011), Japanese single lone mothers and those from the US have different perceptions of marriage, abortion, and having a child out of wedlock, because they have different family ideals. They point to attitudes which regard ‘the most responsible act’ after getting pregnant out of wedlock in the East Asian context as being to have an abortion or to give your child away, as this is better for both the mother and child, as well as it is perceived that this is for the greater good. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the GHA indeed was adopted to be one of the contraception approaches for several decades to control child birth in Taiwan. Here we can see that if these mothers choose to keep their child, there will be a cost of violating the rule of ‘the greater good’. Mothers in this research did not mention whether the price or access to abortion, or the social pressure when having one was a concern when making their decision. Whatever the case, for most of these women they realised that once they decided to keep the child, the cost in terms of childrearing would be higher and the stigma would be more straightforward, owing to the physical presence of the child than if they had had an abortion. Economic advantages seem not be a primary reason for keeping the child. Instead, the drivers discussed in Section 5.2, such as the child’s life matterings, are the leading force which pushed these mothers to make their decisions. This point is illustrated further in the paragraph that follows.

³⁸See note 26.

For examples, several mothers had savings from previous jobs and could support themselves when they decided to take care of the child on their own. Here, three of the mothers told me about their preparation in relation to their financial issues before deciding to keep the child. This sometimes involved the child's father when he was willing to only offer some money.

It was good that when I was young I did two jobs together. And I used my savings to raise him up until he was two years old.

(Yu-chih)

I was pretty rich at that time (when finding out she was pregnant)! [laughs] I was thinking about whether I had got enough money or not. I counted the money (for child birth) and I didn't use it at all. This is why I went for translating the books. The way I did the work was horrible because I was devastated. And you need to do something (to distract yourself).

(Ren-fon)

Before I found out I was pregnant, I had huge savings and it was okay for raising the child up on my own. So, it was not entirely correct if I said I had to depend on him all. But I do think if you would like to keep him, you will have to take the (financial) responsibility.

(Chih-yun)

In Chih-yun's case, she gradually became independent when she decided to return to the labour market. Otherwise, initially, she had to rely on the child's father for the financial aspect of childrearing. Several of the mothers, like Pei-fang, despite not being so financially prepared for the situation in advance, believed that they would be able to work in the future, so they decided to have the child. Their financial capacity truly motivated them to raise the child. However, as in Hui-chial's case, it is noteworthy that some mothers were facing financial difficulties and were therefore unable to afford to live with their children when they discovered they were pregnant. Either they had no money or their earnings were not sufficient to support childrearing in the future. Fang-ling and Hsuan-hsuan both showed their concerns about not being financially capable of

childrearing in the future when we spoke. However, for reasons such as their age or moral standards of abortion, they decided to give birth to their children.

Because I'm also facing problems such as financial constraints. There might be loads of problem. But I thought about these for a while and reckoned she is still a life, so I decided to give birth to her.

(Fang-ling)

My attitude was like, I felt she [Hsuan-hsuan's daughter] would be pitiful if I had an abortion. However, if I choose to not to have an abortion, I would be overburdened.

(Hsuan-hsuan, 19, with an eight-month-old daughter)

In these circumstances, the drive to be mothers actually became the most salient. This echoes Jarrett (1996) who found in her research regarding Black American unwed mothers', a life aspiration, in that being a mother even when they had low-income status was perceived as giving them a higher sense of achievement than if they remained motherless. The economic issues seem to become secondary in the decision-making process by these mothers. However, once they found the moral reasons which drove them to keep the child, sufficient economic conditions could be the pull factors which helped these mothers to take their stance.

5.4.2 Support of family or important others

When they found out they were pregnant, all of the mothers in this research began to struggle with the question of whether to tell their family the truth or not. It can be seen on the ecomaps that they often referred to their family as the key actors, which had an impact on their final decision of becoming a mother. Certainly, when they communicated to their family and received positive responses, they were more encouraged to keep the child. Wei-chen shared her accounts of knowing that her mother would support her in bringing up the child after ex-partner left her, and therefore she could feel confident about her decision.

My family respected my will. When I decided to keep the child, I said it to my friend that, I will talk to my family. If my family objected, I will have an abortion. I felt if my family couldn't support me, after childbirth...I won't say I will feel devastated, but

certainly I'll feel distressed. And my child is also pitiful, because he was not born with expectation. It is also not fair for him.

(Wei-chen)

Moreover, for some mothers, it was their families who urged the mother to keep the child. They promised to offer some degree of financial or physical support such as childcare or a living space, so that the mother would not have to worry. Gue-fen and Hiao-ting are two mothers who were financially supported by the senior male member in the family, which made them feel relieved, and gave birth to the child.

When I had him, my uncle told me, maybe you don't need to work, but you have to take care of him very well.

(Gue-fen)

At the beginning I didn't have any money, and I couldn't manage at all. It was because my father gave me a hand. (...) So when I didn't have any money it was my father to take care of everything

(Hiao-ting)

Ching-hua's family was not so well-off financially. However, her families promised to help with the childcare, which also encouraged them to keep their children.

In comparison to mothers with either emotional or physical support from their family, mothers who did not gain enough support from their family still wanted to be a mother. However, those mothers with less support were forced to find ways of increasing their own resources or to depend on resources outside their own networks, for example the formal benefit system, in order to survive. Therefore, how these mothers handled a family who felt ashamed about them and was reluctant to help together with strategies to cope will be discussed further in the next chapter.

According to Lit (2011), the process sometimes begins with negative reasons such as being over the time limit for an abortion or their previous experience of abortion. However, the unmarried mothers in her research developed their new strength when they realised they were carrying a new life, and they could form a family by being a mother. Additionally,

even though support from their family would be an affective factor during decision period, they were the ones who decided to keep the child, regardless of the strong opinions of their families. Lit (2011) described it as an experience of ‘growth and transformation’ for the mothers in her research, and this is likely to apply to the mother in this research.

5.4.3 Ultimate desire to be mothers

For some mother’s cases, they showed even stronger will of becoming mothers at the beginning no matter what might happen. According to Pan (2005), ‘being a mother’ at some point of the life cycle is highly valued by most women in Taiwan. Therefore, after they faced the circumstances of having to stay cohabited or the broken up relationship and had their own say on keeping their child or not, they feel more relaxed to enter the single motherhood. Ssu-yao was one of the mothers who wanted to be pregnant and have children, despite the fact that she and her cohabiting partners were financially in trouble. She talks about her continual desire to be a mother and how this dream was finally fulfilled.

I always want to. From the very beginning of having a boyfriend, I like to get pregnant. But when I wanted to continue the pregnancy after knowing I was pregnant, the child’s father [former partner] didn’t let me. (...) So, I was so glad when I had this child. (...) It was like I forced him to get me pregnant. [laughs]

(Ssu-yao)

Moreover, as Mei-lan mentioned in Section 5.2, when she considered the option of giving her child away for adoption, she found it hard to accept that her child would be raised by others. She worried about whether the new family would guarantee to provide genuine parental love for her child. Like Mei-lan, Ching-ching and Wei-chen had always felt they could not imagine that there are mothers who choose to give away their own babies after giving birth to them, even though they had to face an unhappy separation from the child’s father. As Ching-ching put it, *‘I do not understand how someone could bear to sell or to kill their children after giving birth to them with such a big effort. I don’t understand the logic behind it.’* As for Wei-chen, she talked about her experience of being asked to give her child up for adoption.

Someone suggested me to give my son away for adoption. And I thought, ‘then what’s the point if I give birth to him?’ I feel I couldn’t bear it! (...) And my

imagination was, even though it is difficult time, we could still manage it. It's like having a dog as your pet. You offered it Cesar³⁹ it will grow up, but if you feed it with leftovers it will still grow up. There's no difference between being rich or not.

(Wei-chen)

In addition to the desire of having a family or being a mother, the fear of giving their children away for adoption to an unsuitable family is a further concern. Worries about the adopted family may treat the child badly, as well as the logic that childbearing and childrearing should be linked up tightly appear to be core reasons for some of these mothers' decision to become a single mother.

In this section, it has gradually become clear that most of these mothers are in a position to raise their children on their own. Other women who have experienced similar circumstances might not make the same decision as they have Wang (2009). Once they had their moral principle in their minds, either from themselves or from their important others, they would keep the child. Moreover, it seems access to abortion and adoption services was not a factor in the Taiwanese context as neither were unaffordable nor appeared to carry too much stigma to use these services, in particular when some of these mothers encountered financial difficulties in childrearing. Although most of them did not seek to become a mother without marriage initially, they all appeared to have wanted to be mothers in the end. This is again very much in line with Duncan and Edwards (1999) claim that 'gendered moral rationalities' are at work and the moral practices after divorce pointed out by Smart and Neale (1999), when mothers in this study decided whether or not to adopt this status. According to Klett-Davies (2012), this decision could be traditional because of their choice to be mothers, but at the same time to be emancipatory, as they have taken a reflexive process to come to this conclusion, which could be considered as a prominent sign of individualisation.

5.5 Summary of this chapter

This chapter has presented the process by which the mothers in this research began their relationships and decided to become mothers without getting married. From the beginning to the end of the relationship, each of their cases is unique and it appears each of them had

³⁹ A famous dog food brand.

their own reasons when they chose to be ‘single’ mothers. When considering the journey they experienced, it would seem that some became more able to be in control of their decisions despite of their circumstances. However, most were forced to make the choice to adopt the never married mother status owing to their being strongly affected by their social beliefs. Moreover, they were very keen to stay in a relationship with their partners as this would provide them with economic security and meet social expectations. However, most of their relationships were built on fragile foundations and hence, were unsustainable. Owing to their perceptions of the unfulfilled responsibilities of parenthood and the oppression of the child’s father’s family, they unwillingly left, for as several of them said to me, *‘nobody wants to be a single mother’*. Consequently, whilst most of them stressed the will to focus on the child’s welfare, it is very likely that in the future that they would start another unstable relationship with the child’s father or another man so as to bolster their economic situation or to achieve their aspiration of being part of a ‘normal’ two-parent family.

However, when facing the decision as to whether to keep the child and become a single mother without getting married, it was their inner beliefs and external resources that underpinned their choices. It has emerged that these issues have had to be considered through ‘gendered moral rationalities’, given that the choice they made (e.g. having a child out of wedlock) were in conflict with those of society at large. Through these rationalities, trivial signs of individualisation occurred on some of them when they were choosing to keep the child as well as leave the child’s father, where they made a reflexive, but yet also a traditional decision – to be a mother. It shows that Confucianism as a cultural ideology has permeated the values and expectations within individuals’ mind, even when they seem at first hand to have created a different biography to other women.

In this chapter, it can be seen that for almost all of the focal women being a never-married single mother in the Taiwanese context was not a choice involving free will, but rather, made in the face of multi-constraints that were confronting them. Under these circumstances, they could only choose what they thought was right at the moment and deal with the consequences. Just as Pei-ti told me, *‘it was not easy to make this choice, but I’m willing to do it’*. This reflexive comment suggests that duty in accordance with traditional Confucian values took priority over personal preferences. Therefore, for these focal mothers, their decisions could only be a ‘constrained individualisation’ at the moment,

where traditional cultural, family and gendered economic strain still stand, rather than the complete form found in the Western world. This is because, firstly, most were unwilling to leave their partners and indeed some of them made attempts to reconcile with the child's father as they believed this would improve their lives, both financially and in terms of security. Secondly, they still had to face future significant challenges as they were perceived, in general, as being unconventional mothers by Taiwanese society. Consequently, the other aspect of the decision-making process required these mothers to consider the reality of whether they could really afford to bring up children on their own.

So far, the push and pull forces of having a child for mothers have been probed. In the following chapter, the financial and social-relational implications of becoming a single lone mother will be examined.

Chapter 6 Consequences of ‘Choosing Your Own Way’: the Double Burdens of Being a Never-married Mother

In the last chapter, the journey to becoming a single mother was discussed. Some signs of individualisation were evident for some of them, such that they could make their own decisions about either keeping the child or leaving the child's father because of their own moral standards. What is of note, is that these moral standards have mostly come from the traditional Confucian ideology of being a good mother and also, satisfying the requirement that the partner be a good father. Hence, this shows that perhaps the unconventional process of individualisation is actually embedded and patterned in the existent cultural ideal, and that choices are informed by the context. On the other hand, there were some focal mothers who were more bonded to the traditional norms and facing stronger conflict in their lives. It is therefore necessary to bear in mind that the differences amongst these mothers indeed existed, which also is reflected the different level of the consequences after their decision to become a never-married mother.

Even though they have been through their own moral decision process, there are still certain consequences that await them in the outside world that can cause them to suffer. In this chapter, two major effects of being never-married mothers in a Confucian society are discussed. The first is the economic challenges in relation to their financial situation and employment status. Based on Millar and Glendinning (1989), Millar (1992), and the other research on gendered-economic disadvantage, it is evident that many of these mothers are caught in the trap of being single mothers with a high risk of poverty because they are women. The second important consequence for these women is the social-relational challenges they are facing when becoming a mother. Drawing on Goffman (1963) the aim is to critically integrate these women's narratives to investigate the role of stigma in their everyday lives. When describing each of the challenges, the discussion also covers the nature of any external support provided by their family, friends and the state when never-married single mothers seek financial help. This will provide a picture of how some of these mothers have needed support from the private and public sector and how their networks responded in relation to the informal and formal support as well as the behaviour or attitudes towards that support. From these two effects, it will be elicited not only how being a single mother might constrain their capability to sustain themselves

economically, but also, how Confucian ideology can bring a sense of shame and place stigma on these mothers in both private and public arenas, when they were identified as mothers who are not in a ‘proper marriage’.

6.1 The challenge of facing ‘life on one’s own’

As mentioned in Chapter 5, the mothers in this research faced two junctures when they were forced to make a decision to keep or give up their child. One was when they found out they were pregnant and the other, when their partners had decided to leave them. They not only needed to make the decision according to their own beliefs, but also according to their own financial situation at these times. As much of the research on financial difficulties amongst single mothers has highlighted in Chapter 3, in particular Glendinning and Millar (1992) (Section 3.3), the situation of these mothers struggling to manage their livelihood is due to their disadvantaged position as women in society. Edwards and Duncan (1997) also emphasised that mothers’ choices in regards to taking up paid work or full-time motherhood are based on a ‘gendered moral rationality’, which is strongly affected by the social norms in the particular context and not just their economic rationale. Accordingly, it has been demonstrated how Confucian societies adopted a stereotyped role of being a good mother or a carer instead of a provider (Liu, 1997). Women are thus subordinate in the labour market with lower-income and insecure types of jobs, where East Asian welfare regimes also enhance the negative economic effect by supporting the complete family and male-breadwinner model, offering only residual help for women who fall into poverty. These have resulted in the situation of what Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) called women’s ‘incomplete individualisation’ (p. 56-57), whereby women were trapped in between ‘no longer’ and ‘not yet’, and had to absorb the risk by themselves. Therefore, in this section, the subsequent financial challenges when becoming a never-married mother at the individual level are first scrutinised against this background, especially regarding the circumstances that the mothers in this research faced when seeking employment or childcare and how this impacted on their financial independence.

6.1.1 Employment insecurity

During the very first stages of deciding to become never-married mothers and raise their children up on their own, only a few of the mothers could afford to do so. It was easier for those with a higher level of education and thus, possessing greater future potential in the

labour market. However, in reality, many of these mothers began to struggle with their personal financial situation when they could not maintain a proper job and support themselves and their child on their own. It has been shown by Hsueh (2001) that the poverty rate of single-parent households in Taiwan is higher than two-parent ones and the prevalence of poverty among single-mother ones is greater than for single-father households. Resonating with the critical point made by Rowlingson and McKay (2002) that poor women might become lone mothers and become even poorer, it would appear that some mothers in this study had already faced financial difficulties before giving birth to the child and thus they had expected life to become more challenging given the extra mouth they would have to feed. As already determined by Chen and Chung (2008), Taiwanese women are relatively worse off than men in the social security system, because they are in a weaker position in the labour market. That is, social security payments are awarded through an insurance system and if someone has made insufficient contributions then he/she will get less or even nothing at all than a person who has paid up in full. As a result, this increases the risk of Taiwanese single mothers' financial hardship and forces them to depend more on state benefits (Kuo & Wu, 2003). Given this situation, it is important to probe what happened to these mothers following childbirth in terms of their access to the labour market and the impact on their financial circumstances.

Unfortunately and unsurprisingly, the financial risk soon began to have effect, and some of the mothers stressed that the main obstacle to maintain a full-time job was having a new baby to take care of. Below, several of the mothers with blue collar types of jobs made the decision to quit them when they found out they were pregnant.

Before I got pregnant, I worked in a motel as a housekeeper. It was too dangerous as I was too old to become pregnant. We needed to climb up the stairs, because all the rooms were at level two or three. And we had to carry our own stuff with ourselves while it was heavy. And I bled at the beginning when I was pregnant. So I decided to quit it.

(Hsiu-li, was a housekeeper in a motel)

Because when I got pregnant, they were using diesel or something like that. I was afraid the smell might cause some problem to the baby so I quit it when I was four months pregnant.

(Jo-yu, was a CNC lathe operator)

I quit the job when I found I was pregnant. Because the job is mainly the late night shift.

(Hiao-bing, was a logistics clerk)

As the narratives have shown, these mothers at this stage were worried about their baby's health when their jobs could cause potential harm to their own health and thus, decided to quit. Their decision to give up work in accordance with the notion of being a good mother in the Taiwanese context indicated that their main concern was for the wellbeing of both themselves and their unborn child. As most of these mothers came to their decision to become mothers and treasured their identity as mothers the most, it can be seen that some of them had placed the need for earning an income in the labour market to second place. However, it should be noted that in these mothers' cases, they had their partners or family at that time to back up their decision and to support them financially. Without financial support from their close networks, they would have had to rely on state benefits to manage the financial consequences. It cannot be ignored that, following the decision to give up work, those mothers could not avoid being worried about issues to do with childcare, in particular, the need to work in order to afford it and to maintain a reasonable standard of living. However, over two thirds of the mothers in this research had a child(ren) under six years old and only four out of the 30 had children all over this age. So, as many needed to pick up their children after nursery or school, they struggled to be able commit to a full-time job with a fixed working time table. Su-lan, with one child of school age and one needing nursery care, pointed out her difficulty in having full time work.

If I'm going to work in a factory or a company, it is not possible. I have to take my children to and from their schools. There's really no other way.

(Su-lan)

In addition to giving up work out of choice, some mothers were of the opinion their jobs would become too demanding given the child care requirements and eventually they would have been asked to leave. In Yu-mei's case, she was asked to leave her job when she could not fulfil the requirements the work time table as a nursery worker.

I was still at work but all of a sudden I was told to leave the job, because I couldn't fit into the requirement from the nursery. They asked me to work overtime on Saturday, or extra hours in the evening. (...) I was only one person to take care of my child, if you want to fit in whatever I was asked, I'd have to bring my kid together with me. But they didn't allow me to. Several times I had to be absent and they said I couldn't meet to their timetable and asked me to leave the job.

(Yu-mei)

Above mentioned narratives are in line with the findings of Cheng et al. (2008) whereby many of the never-married mothers had decided to, or had been forced to, delay their employment until at least three years after giving birth. Even mothers with a relatively better position in the labour market among the participants in the study, found it difficult to manage both. Ssu-ting, for instance, when she needed to manage work and care, she found she did not have enough time to deal with both. She described to me her daily life as like firefighting, as everyday she had to rush somewhere and was always in a hurry.

Unfortunately, the interruption of employment is not only happening among mothers with fixed hours types of job. Sometimes, even the most flexible work could not help these mothers when their lives got harder. Ching-ching had to quit her self-employed clothes wholesale work in the big city to come back to her hometown to take care of her ill mother and at the same time she was the only one who could pick her son up from school or after-school class. This situation brings to the fore the fact that women in Taiwan are invariably expected to be the primary domestic carers when their family is in need Wang et al. (2013). For Ching-ching, quitting her job and relinquishing the resources obtained from her own income became an unavoidable decision when her carer role was demanded.

I needed to go back to Taipei once a month to settle some agreements in the business, as I couldn't just leave everything to my partner at work and still get some bonus shared. And after a long time I started to feel it is time to let go and give up all of this, otherwise we couldn't share the sales like this. (...) And my son started to enter the primary school and after-school class or so. I had to pick him up all the time, so this [quitting her job] is what I had to do.

(Ching-ching)

It is also noteworthy that, in terms of type of full-time job the above mentioned mothers considered or had, it was more likely to be a blue-collar job such as working in a factory as an operator or in a nursery as a teaching assistant. In addition, even if they worked in a company, they often only worked at a low level such as a clerk. This supports the discussion in Chapter 3, where the gender segregation in the labour market is salient, such that women in Taiwan are still inclined to work in subordinate jobs in the labour market. While it works for a family with a full-time male worker and a part-time female worker, the blue-collar, part-time and low-income types of job that some of these single mothers are forced into, means they are unable to afford their family lives without outside help.

From the narratives presented above, it can be seen that from the moment when some of them found out they were pregnant, their employment status became extremely insecure. Many researchers in Taiwan have pointed out the difficulties for single mothers to have sustained employment (Chen, 2002a; Lin, 2007). Even when they wanted to and kept trying to participate in the labour market, and despite the Gender Equality in Employment Law (GEEL)⁴⁰ launched at 2002 for the protection of equal rights for men and women in the market, it is evident that there are some ‘hidden rules’ that employers exercise when hiring women (Yang, 2009). Chia-chia talked about her perspective pertaining to the employer’s requirements of an employee in respect of rules.

When you’re at work your child is easy to have all kinds of problems. And when he’s [her son] having problems such as having fever or so, you’re the one to ask for a day’s leave to take care of him. So these employers don’t like people with children, especially when the children are little like around one or two years old. (...) What they care about is when you ask for leave too often. (...) These are elements showing you’re unstable, as when you take a day off or so, this will affect their daily operation or put too much burden on the other colleagues.

(Chia-chia)

From Chia-chia’s case, it can be seen that there are unfriendly employers out there who prefer employees without too much trouble in their personal lives. This, is why Chia-chia

⁴⁰ In article seven, it was regulated that the employer should not discriminate any potential applicants or employees owing to their gender or sexual orientation. If the employer is found violating the regulation they will be fined.

learnt to avoid revealing her current status – unmarried with one child - to any employers when she was looking for a job.

From these mothers' narratives, it was shown that, before becoming pregnant, these women's financial circumstances were already precarious. However, they found themselves subjected to an even worse situation after giving birth to their children as the employment available was only casual and insufficient to afford them a sustainable lifestyle. It can be seen that, perhaps unsurprisingly, many of the mothers with children in this research, were happy to be full-time mothers taking care of their much wanted children but still would like to have the opportunity to integrate employment into their motherhood so that they could provide for their child(ren). However, if they could not find a job which allowed them to be flexible with time and regulations or one able to offer sufficient income or a secure working environment, they felt they had no alternative other than to stay at home, becoming a full-time mother dependant on welfare. In this respect, it suggested that the process of Individualisation for women was indeed under constraint. It would be of question whether they could be fully economically independent through the labour market, and as Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) had warned, women are thus more likely to be thrown back on their own resources.

Unfortunately the labour market in Taiwan does not support the process of individualisation. As Wu (2005) has asserted, even though Taiwanese single mothers might have utilised their own ability in the labour market and their social network for support, they still struggle in the situation of being poor with work. For, it is necessary to take the contextual factors, such as the male breadwinner model formed by a traditional patriarchal society, where women are normally taken as subordinate in the labour market and earning relatively low income than men, into consideration. This resonates with Yang (2009) and Chen (2014), who emphasised in their studies single mothers' difficulties in the labour market, pointing out that the obstacles hindering single mothers from being in stable employed are never just of their own making, for they are also about the context they are living in. The contextual factors, including the labour market and social policies, have contributed to many of these mothers taking on their own care work, whether they are willing to do so or not. Finally, as the evidence has revealed, childcare arrangements can affect the capacity of such mothers to participate in the labour market. In the next section, the challenge of managing childcare resources is explored more in detail.

6.1.2 Negotiating Childcare

Having discussed the financial effect of motherhood at the individual level their childcare arrangements need to be considered in light of this. From the last subsection, it is apparent that the most challenging period of time occurred when the mothers' children were at young age. Three ways were identified in which the mothers arranged their childcare when the child was still under six years old. The majority approach in this study was taking care of their children themselves, in particular, when their children were at pre-nursery school⁴¹ age. The second type of childcare is relying on family members who are capable and willing to help. The third way was by using a childcare facility or a childminder and regarding the latter, many will care for children under three years old for 24 hours. In this subsection, the challenges from the three forms of childcare arrangements are probed in order to understand their considerations behind their choices of childcare arrangements.

Women are culturally and morally expected to take care of the children, if they wish to consider themselves good mothers in the Taiwanese context (Chuag, 1998; Xiao & Li, 2002). Moreover, it is a common phenomenon to ask parent-in-laws or parents to take care of the children in order to reduce childcare costs (Hung, 2008). According to findings from Fu and Wang (2011), nearly 90 percent of children from 0 to 3 are taken care of by the mother herself or relatives, such as the parents-in-law, mainly to reduce the cost of childcare. In the mothers' cases in this research, more than half of them took care of their children when they were under two years old. Here, Hui-Chiao talks about her arrangement when her child was little. In particular, she mentioned her feelings when thinking about letting her son being taken care of by other people.

It's mainly me. My mother could only help me a little bit when she comes back from her work. (...) Since taking care of him I found... I cannot leave him! I don't feel comfortable to let him being taken care of by others. Even he's one year old and he can walk, I still feel he's not stable enough (to be taken care of by others).

(Hui-Chiao, operating an on-line business, with a two-month-old son)

⁴¹ In Taiwan, most of the children are enrolled in a nursery school any time from 3 to 5 years old. The state provides vouchers to offset the cost of private and public childcare facilities for this period of time (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2010). Not until very recently that some local governments have subsidies for these facilities to support parents with children under three years old (Taichung City Government [TCG], 2015).

It can be seen that childrearing in motherhood was so critical to Hui-chiao that she was reluctant to give up being a carer. Jo-yu, on the other hand, wanted to go back to work and so, at the time of the interview she had just asked her mother to be the main carer. She expected her mother to be the future carer like most Taiwanese parents once the child's mother finds a job, as this arrangement would set her mind at ease. She talked me through her consideration of lowering the childcare cost by asking her mother to take care of the child and also applied for the childcare subsidies for her mother, *If I could ask my mother to take care of him [her son], she doesn't have any license (for a childminder), but she could still apply (subsidies) for 2,000 dollars*⁴².

What is of note is, when mothers are the main carers it means that they have more or less some support provided by, for example, their family, for their living or housing other than the childcare. However, some mothers did not have this type of support and therefore, had to manage their own livelihoods, as well as trade off the resources to be spent on childcare in particular. It can be seen that several mothers were struggling to make ends meet if they had to work to pay the childcare fees. In Yue-shia's case, as she tried to manage both but failed, she made up her mind to be a full-time mother and rely on her past savings and welfare benefits for her current living.

It should be noted that, not every mother in this study became the main carer 'voluntarily' like Yue-shia. Some of the mothers who had a high motivation to re-join the labour market as soon as possible after the birth of their child had to withdraw owing to circumstances beyond their control. In addition to gendered obstacles in labour market (as mentioned in Section 6.1.1), unstable resources for supporting their needs in terms of childcare could also be a problem. Despite some of the mothers being lucky enough to have support from their family or their cohabiting partners, such that they expected themselves to be able to sustain work, this support could be unreliable, and those providing support could experience a change in circumstances. Apart from being precarious, the limited resources for supporting childcare meant low quality, which forced some of the mothers to take on the childcare role. In Hsuan-hsuan's example, her mother's health deteriorated after she had agreed to share the childcare burden. Here, she explains to me the reason why she returned to work right after her daughter was just born.

⁴² New Taiwanese Dollars (NTD). 48 NTD equals one pound in 2014.

I had a job. And my mother she took care of both him [her brother, six, with autism] and her [her daughter]. And because my mother's health was not good. She needed to go back to the hospital to be checked regularly with her diabetes. Besides that she got surgery for her heart so she couldn't work. And it became impossible for her to do the care work.

(Hsuan-hsuan)

In contrast to the mothers who were not involved in a relationship at the time of being interviewed, those who were cohabiting with their partner could also take care of their children themselves, but with extra resources from him or his family. As reported in Chapter 5, Hiao-bing talked about the difficulties in negotiating with her soon-to-be mother-in-law regarding the time to take care of her son, and she explained how she was arranging the childcare at the time of being interviewed, *'I'm the one who takes care of my daughter. I took care of my son, too. It's just now is my (soon-to-be) mother-in-law (who is taking care of him).'* However, it is of note that her mother-in-law did not like her being away from her son, saying *'you wanted to have children then you have to take care of them by yourself'*. As a result, although Hiao-bing was actually very willing to look for a job when her son got older, she had to stick to her role of being a responsible mother as her prospective mother-in-law was requesting.

In this study some mothers were subject to health conditions, either the mother herself or her child, which required additional expenses and attention regarding care work. These are often the enduring challenges faced by mothers and children who are relatively disadvantaged for a long period of time. One of the extreme examples was Shu-fen, whose 16-year-old son was born with cleft palate. As for herself, after the childbirth, she also began to suffer from rheumatoid arthritis. Whilst she had been so confident that she would be economically independent as she had sufficient working experience⁴³, this illness has

⁴³ Her quotes for being a confident worker:

Before I had my son, I seldom got ill, and then I had strong autonomy. I was out for work very early [around primary school]. I have experienced this society its different perspectives. After the childbirth, I felt I'll be fine. I knew my speciality and I could work. I'm not only a nursery teacher but also a hairdresser. I'm like half of a teacher because I began my career very early.

(Shu-fen)

led her to having to depend on welfare benefits for her living and on her younger brother for housing. What is of note is, in her case, the former resources were stable enough, but not the latter, as she had just had to move out of her younger brother's flat to a single-parent home run by local government. Here, Shu-fen explains how she perceived the pressure from her younger brother and her decision to move out.

My brother was searching for another flat because the landlord was going to sell the house. And he [her bother] unconsciously revealed his true feelings, so I found out that actually for the last 15 years (helping) my son and I had given him so much pressure. (...) Because he hasn't got married yet, and he also has to afford utility fees and rent. (...) In the end, what he acted unconsciously showed that, he wished us to go.

(Shu-fen)

From Fang-lin, Hiao-bing, and Shu-fen's examples, the nature of these mothers' accessible support has emerged and has shown how it can be negatively influenced by their situations as single mothers. That is, given the shame of having a daughter-in-law who transgressed the norms of 'being married and then giving birth to the child as well as violating the strong set of beliefs towards gendered roles, can lead to a lack of offers of sufficient support from the family. It is also evidential from other studies that single mothers in Taiwan tend to receive less informal support from their family than single fathers (Pong, 2005; Yeh, 2011). Moreover, the statistics have also shown that it is more prevalent for single fathers to ask for childcare from their own parents (47%) than single mothers (27%) (MoI, 2010), thus highly suggesting that the support system surrounding single mothers tends to be biased according to gender.

As for the third form of support, namely public or private external childcare, this has been considered as being one of the essential channels for encouraging mothers to participate in the labour market (Cheng & Hung, 2005; Liu, 2011). However, the efforts being placed on promoting the prevalence of public childcare were not as effective as expected (Wang, 2014). In addition to these mothers' concerns about having to care for their child when the child was sick, another constraint regarding most of the childcare facilities was their opening hours. Here, Chia-chia speaks of how restricted they were when she was applying for some potential jobs.

I had to match it to the time table of the nursery which closes at the weekend and I couldn't find any. You have to make some time to take care of your child by yourself. Businesses like restaurants or cafes they don't let you take any days off at the weekends, because weekends are their best chance to make money. Some of the jobs need you to take shifts and I couldn't do that either.

(Chia-chia)

From the narratives in the previous two sections, it can be seen that many of the mothers in this study considered rejoining the labour market as soon as possible, if they could find any resources to help with the childcare. It seems that they were in the 'mother/worker integral' mode, which Duncan and Edwards (1999) have termed according to 'gender moral rationalities' in their research on single mothers, where they felt that economic security denotes a good quality of life for their child. However, they could suffer from various factors that forced them to deal with their childcare arrangements by themselves, whether due to lack of family support or lack of money for nursery care. Indeed, their best childcare solutions varied according to their moral beliefs and the resources available when facing this uncertainty, which closely resembles Edwards and Duncan (1996) claim about single mothers' moral considerations in relation to the uptake and undertaking of paid work. In the end, through the interplay of the following three resource factors: whether they were able to stay at work and maintain a decent salary; whether they could afford acceptable childcare; and/or whether the family was willing and capable of helping out, a dynamic mechanism involving factors such as gender and class have emerged as determining the outcomes for these single mothers' financial situation, for good or bad. In the next subsection, the experiences of those mothers entirely engaged in the social welfare system is discussed.

6.1.3 The downsides of benefits

For some mothers, after facing the crisis of being a never-married mother, they fell into financial hardship and desperately sought resources. In this section, when considering the process of these women seeking help outside their personal relationships, two aspects need to be discussed: the limited access to the benefits and the stigma attached to them. As highlighted by Chen (2002a), the state is the formal channel through which single mothers can receive their support, but in most scenarios to they become stigmatised from firstly,

having to expose their identities in order to obtain the resources and secondly, these channels have, in fact, been used as tools to control women. In understanding the interaction when some mothers drew on state resources, a picture is built over how the Taiwanese state positions its female citizens and how it distributes the resources when they are in need.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the mothers in this study were mostly welfare recipients, even some who were employed when they were interviewed. In order to obtain their entitlement, they needed to send in a completed benefits application form and their previous year's income had to be below a certain threshold. As mentioned in Chapter 2, funds for single mothers in Taiwan are mostly from the Act of Assistance for Family in Hardship (AFH), which is one of the selective benefits for families with only one parent and an income lower than specific level⁴⁴. It offers an amount of money for the first three months when the family is 'supposedly' in extreme need and monthly allowances for each child in the family. Hiao-bing and Hsiu-li demonstrate how for them the use of the subsidies was for 'urgent matters'⁴⁵, such as childbirth and monthly allowances from AFH.

It was used on the things for the childbirth and the things for the new born child to use. Also, the fees for me to stay at the hospital and the fees for the child to leave the hospital. This is sort of all.

(Hiao-bing)

In each month you have 2,500 dollars to claim and you can save some money for the diapers. It is still of some help.

(Hsiu-li)

⁴⁴ The applicant's average monthly income per child should be lower than 2.5 times of the lowest living expense announced by the Ministry of Interior[Mol]. It is 28,620 NTD (11,448 NTD x 2.5) in 2015; equivalent to around £600 equivalently. Meanwhile the value of the property owned by the family should also be under certain amount as determined by local governments.

⁴⁵ According to AFH as amended in 2014, the urgent matters include; 1) losing a spouse; 2) abandoned with malice abuse and divorced (by judicial decree); 3) domestic violence; 4) unmarried pregnancy; 5) raising child(ren) under 18 years old after divorce; 6) spouse is subjected to imprisonment; and 7) other economic difficulties other than personal liability, indebtedness, or voluntary unemployment (AFH, 2014).

It also includes monthly subsidies for childcare providers, such as government-registered childminders and childcare facilities, either public or private, but this is generally considered as not being enough. In some mothers' opinions, such as Hsiu-li, this amount of money indeed helped them through the difficult times. However, as Hsuan-hsuan commented '*For immediate help around the birth they had it there. But if this is going to be your main living expenses, it'll be a bit difficult*'. Several mothers actually questioned the effectiveness of AFH they had claimed, pointing out if something unforeseen happened, such when in Fang-ling's case, her scooter broke down⁴⁶; the money was never enough. Even though there were some other mothers who received other form of benefits, they were generally in a similar position with the money being temporary, only a small amount and just for the children. Moreover, they could not apply for AFH as well.

In terms of the stigma of being an applicant for welfare benefits, most of those concerned stood up for their right to get such support. When I probed what kind of the benefits they had applied, some of them reacted in a defensive manner, others began to insist that they were entitled to benefits and actively sought them regardless the embarrassment that this could bring about. Wei-chen, for example, slightly changed her cheerful mood and emphasised to me seriously the importance of this extra income to her and her son's life.

To be honest if you asked me whether I'm capable of providing for my son and myself, yes I am, but it's just a very heavy burden. I need to pay for the childminder, some living costs. It is definitely stressful for me.

(Wei-chen)

Like Wei-chen, Shui-lien also explained to me how she was urged by her local administrative officer to apply for certain AFH benefits for her disabled two-year-old, daughter, when she was not sure could do so. She said to me:

If like before, according to my personality, I wouldn't apply this, as I felt I didn't need it and I had a job. It should be given to somebody who is much more in need. But now I applied it because I don't have another way. I need it. And it was

⁴⁶ The main transportation in Taiwan, especially in areas other than big cities with sufficient public transportation such as Taipei.

somebody else who pushed me and said, 'if you're qualified why not? More or less you got some support.' So I went on for a try.

(Shui-lien)

To apply for benefits which could cover their living expenses, some of the mothers looked to the Public Assistance Act (PAA) in Taiwan for low or middle-low-income households. However, the stigma attached to it is also severe (Chen, 2006; Hiesh, 2013), and when the never-married mothers were applying these benefits was the property/income investigation system, whereby it is compulsory to take into account the value of property or level of income of the mother's original family, regardless as to whether they were prepared to help financially or not (to be discussed in Subsection 6.2.1) (Cheng, 2000). Two mothers mentioned how difficult it was when they tried to access the support from the government, because the appraising system took into account their unhelpful parents' circumstances, which they thought was exceedingly unfair.

My mother's house is hers not ours right? But it was counted in as part of our resources. And my mother doesn't want to offer me any help. I feel the government should do something about it.

(Yue-shia)

I was wondering if it's possible that the application of the low-income household could be easier and less strict. They said it is necessary to count in my mother's income. But my mother's income is her income. She has other way to use it. For example, my younger brother lost his job and became unemployed for some months. She has had to take care of him. She is not able to take care of me like that. And then because we have a house. It was counted in, too.

(Pei-Fang)

From the narratives selected above, it is quite obvious to see that the current welfare system in Taiwan is still following the principles of the residual welfare and considers the family as a unit of self-assistance. As Chiu (2015) found in his research in relation to the PAA censorship regulations, the requirement of multiple moralities including family responsibility have been put onto the applicants and hence, limited its scope for offering

support to the most needy households. Thus, it can be seen that the state will only provide support if there is no helpful immediate family. This also creates an implicit but prevalent atmosphere of the state being seen as ‘preventing applications’ despite their responsibility to those in need. Instead, the state’s strategy would appear to be driven by the ideological rationale for ‘the greater good’ (i.e. ‘if you cannot afford a child, have an abortion’) when these mothers cannot afford their lives with their children, which, as the following shows, results in such things as their being encouraged to give their children away for adoption. Here, Yu-chih shared her impression with me on the attitudes of the state regarding single mothers in terms of the lack of information when searching for help.

They only told you about giving your children away for adoption, but they never promoted the idea of “you’re single mothers and the government will assist you with subsidies.” I remember there was a TV commercial talking about it. (...) They never thought of what you really want. They only said if you’re not able to (raise a child) you should give the child away for adoption, but they never think that there might be people willing to raise children up on their own.

(Yu-chih)

Through her narrative, it can be seen that even though the state might have the good will to help mothers who were in disadvantaged situations and were thinking about giving away their children, this actually goes against the general norms regarding what becoming a mother is. The economic rationale of the ‘greater good’ and the ideological norms of what being a ‘good mother’ is, thus exist paradoxically not only within a mother’s daily choices, but also in the public sphere.

As the state provided allowances could not really cover their living expenses, some of the mothers and these children also depended on support from certain NGOs. Both resources combined together meant they could just cover their living costs, including paying rent, utility bills, childcare fees and other expenses. There were eight mothers who were reliant completely on welfare, such as Hiao-li mentioned in Chapter 5, as her partner was in prison at the time of her being interviewed. Indeed, in comparison to the mothers who were capable of and confident in taking care of themselves, these mothers were in a relatively vulnerable position.

It has been demonstrated in this section that it was not easy for the majority of the mothers in this research to manage their lifestyle on their own in terms of remaining in the labour market with sufficient amount of income and support, while taking care of the child at the same time. Moreover, many of those who needed to claim sufficient stable formal benefits to cover all of their living costs were failing to do so, because of lack of support from the state. The shame they felt about their situation and the embarrassment they would have to face when explaining why they needed resources frustrated some of them regarding the process.

In the next section, another aspect of these mothers' challenges in relation to interpersonal relationships will be scrutinised through the perspective of stigma in relation to their experiences when they were asking for help from, or interacting with, their social network and striving to maintain their identity after becoming a mother.

6.2 The challenge from personal relationships

What became apparent in the last section is that mothers having to deal with their finance and care work on their own is a universal challenge. However, never-married mothers face an additional challenge when their status becomes known to relatives or friends, because often in Taiwan they encounter negative reactions, in particular when they ask for support. This is also very obvious in the process of naming their 'alters' in ecomaps, which were used as a tool to interview them, where they clearly identified who supported and rejected them during the process of becoming a never-married single mother. From Goffman's perspective, this is the moment when they began their 'moral career' (1963), which denotes that their lives commence with the awareness of them as a stigmatised group of mothers in a society that does not accept them completely. From another perspective, these relational challenges could be taken as the obstacles towards completing the process of 'detraditionalisation' as one of the target of Individualisation, as the shame brought by the society adamantly controlled their behaviours and beliefs for a collective purpose (Dovido et al., 2000). In this section, drawing on the categories of networks that the process of ecomapping helped to elicit and establish, the consequences of unwed pregnancy on mothers' social networks and with their family are discussed further.

6.2.1 Responses from the family

In the research field of teenage mothers, it is known that when a teenage girl finds she is pregnant, she will usually turn to her mother or other close family members for support and guidance (Apfel & Seitz, 1991). However, whether the person approached provides this or not varies according to their ideal of familism (Contereras et al., 2002). That is, when the person supporting someone in such a predicament uphold strong familistic values, he or she (mostly the mother's mother in teenage mothers' cases) would more likely to 'attune to family member's need, offer support and maintain the family's connection' (Zeiders et al., 2015). For the mothers in this research, nevertheless, most of them assumed their families would act in accordance with their strong familistic values⁴⁷ and hence, would judge them harshly for having a child out of wedlock. Given this anxiety, most of the mothers hid their pregnancy from their family to start with and only let them know at the last minute – when the child was born. This was the juncture when it became apparent whether they would obtain support from their family in the future. If their family was supportive, like some of them mentioned in Chapter 5, then this made it much easier to decide to keep the child. In this section, the challenges when these mothers' families were not willing to offer support, mainly because of the shame of having a daughter who was pregnant without being married, are investigated.

Seven of mothers did not dare to tell their parents the truth in the beginning and some of them made a lot of effort to cover things up. However, the situation was eventually revealed by accident, or was found out by family members when they noticed their figures changing shape. For example, Chia-chia planned to hide her pregnancy from her parents by attaching her and her son to her friend's household address. However, because of a procedural mistake made by the civil authorities, her son's health insurance card⁴⁸ was

⁴⁷ In contrast to the Latin American style of familism, much research that has focused on divorced and widowed single mothers' support systems in Taiwan have provided a path for understanding this phenomenon and highlighted that there is a cultural cause underpinning it (Pong, 2005). That is, in the traditional patriarchy society single mothers, especially married ones, are seen as 'water being spat out and never to return', and it is shameful for that the original family to 'reclaim' the daughter who supposed to belong to her husband's family. Therefore, according to Pong (2005), the support from the family for a daughter is not a duty, but rather, a voluntary gesture of goodwill.

⁴⁸ An ID card that is necessary in order to get access to National Health Insurance. Patients should bring the card along with them to see doctors in order to claim the insurance fee.

mailed to her family home and draw her parents' attention. In Chia-chia's case, it ended in a huge row with her parents and they had not seen each other since. In some other mothers' examples, by contrast, whilst their being pregnant or having given birth to a child was found out by their parents or siblings, they had fortunately been offered support, to some extent.

It was almost five months that they knew it. [Sighs] It was actually found by them [her family] when I couldn't cover it or deal with it by myself anymore.

(Pei-ti)

Why I didn't tell her [her mother] was because I was afraid of being told off by her. I was only 19! (...) When I gave birth to her I was 20, and it was found out by my elder brother and his girlfriend. As I locked myself up at home all the time and was wearing something very wide...

(Man-chuan, 34, with a 14-year-old daughter)

In terms of the response of their parents when they knew the child was a fact after covering the whole thing up, in most cases this was fierce. Several mothers encountered difficulty in gaining their family's support immediately after revealing the fact of having a child out of wedlock. Shui-lien, for example, was furiously told off by her mother after telling her that her granddaughter had just been born. Her mother said 'oh it's not right' and 'told her off like hell' after she informed her. However, fortunately her family agreed to help her by offering a place to stay and in fact, she was staying in her family home when she was interviewed. Nevertheless, Shui-lien told me that her mother still felt ashamed in front of her friends that she had become a single mother. According to Goffman (1986), these mothers' family might be experiencing the 'courtesy stigma', which is placed on normal people who have affiliation with the stigmatized group. In other words, they nearly share the same stigma with the stigmatized one even when they are 'normal'.

More than half of the mothers in this research were living in their family homes at the time I interviewed them, as housing was one of the highest expenses regarding their daily financial activity. However, some of those who provided a place for these mothers did not offer emotional support, because they were bothered by the issue of raising a child out of wedlock. As Mollborn (2009) has pointed out, it is very likely that such mothers' material

support from family members will be sanctioned due to the level of embarrassment they perceive. Similar to *Shui-lien*, Fang-ling was facing the same situation but worse in terms of her family's attitudes. Even though she and her daughter were able to stay in the family home, she faced violence from her brother and rows with the rest of her family from time to time. For a short period of time her mother had helped taking care of her daughter, while she was at work. However she had found out that her daughter was being physically abused by her mother. She told me that *'I found it was because my brother feels I didn't get married but I had a child that sort of thing'*, which is evidence that these mothers' male family members could play a decisive role in the matter of pregnancy and bringing up a child without having ever been married. That is, they could either be the main supporters, or they could be the main opponents.

In other cases, the whole family could be the opponents. In Yue-shia's situation, her mother did not accept that she could go back and stay in the family home. She told me how her mother threw her belongings out of the house and how her siblings rejected her right to inherit anything from her parents.

She talked about how my brother should inherit the whole property and that I would have to legally give up my right. And I said, 'I'm not going to agree with it'. And then she replied, 'then I'm not going to offer you any help'. (...) My mother is from the South and is a bit conventional. Treasuring the boys and look down at the girls.

(Yue-shia)

Here in the Taiwanese single mothers' cases, mothers' family's perspectives of offering mutual support, or taking the responsibility to care, were highly correlated with their familial beliefs and gendered norms. The right to housing and denial of future property inheritance are manifestations of this association. This also happened in the case cohabiting mothers, such as Hiao-li. She had to live by herself as her mother thought her soon-to-be son-in-law should be the one to take responsibility for their daughter and their grandchildren's lives; not her family. Hiao-li explained her family's concerns as *'They are afraid that if they decided to help me, he would think her family could be the one to lean on.'* When I asked her whether she thought her family's decision was fair to her or not, she said to me it was actually her fault so there was nothing to complain about. These cases are again very much reflecting the Confucian ideology – the role you should play in a family

and the efforts you should make in your life and how much these mothers had internalised these in their beliefs. Given everything is so limited in terms of the gendered role an individual should play, a single mother would find it hard to justify her behaviour when it is seen as challenging existing institutions. As a result, if no support from the family was offered to them, many of the focal mothers internalised the social norms into their belief system and thus, accepted this situation without complaint.

In some cases, relational challenges after the birth of the child were inevitable, because there had been poor familial relationships even before the mother had started being intimate with men. Just as Finch and Mason (1993) have discussed in their book regarding how family members' dependence on each other and their reciprocal support tend to be affected by their past history of interaction, many of the mothers in this research could not receive any additional support as their past relationships with their family had become very fragile or had even broken down. A case of a distressing family set up before starting the relationship with her boyfriend was that of Yu-mei. She had experienced violence from her father for many years and had suffered depression since then. Here, she explains to me how all the bad memories came back while she was fighting with her father about her child's discipline issues.

Because my father was going to hit my child. When he was one year old I brought him back to my family house quite often. One thing is because I wished to move back home, pick up the relationship with my parents. The other thing was to save some rent. (...) (Because he wanted to hit my child,) I challenged him, 'how were you as a father to me?' He was so mad and we had a physical fight. I couldn't win and could only bite him on his arm. (...) From that time he kicked me out of the house and never wanted me to go back again.

(Yu-mei)

Unfortunately, this had resulted in her being kicked out by her father when she strongly expected to remain in the family home. In Yu-mei's narratives, it would seem that these mothers' history with their family could also be the reason why they and their family behaved and responded in a certain way. It was actually very hard for these mothers to return home and ask for help. However, as discussed in the previous section, the family in a Confucian society like Taiwan is invariably seen as the main source of support by the

state regardless of whether the mothers' past relationship with it has been good or not. This often led to a certain level of confusion amongst these mothers in terms of their level of entitlement to receive resources from the public sector.

6.2.2 Responses from friends and colleagues

Regarding these never-married mothers' wider relationships with friends, colleagues, neighbours and/or relatives, significant evidence of mothers being rejected was also uncovered. According to the categories presented by Herek (2009), this could be the point when these mothers sensed strong "enacted stigma" when they tried to interact with the external world beyond their family. Moreover, they could feel the stigma and plan to react towards it on some occasions (i.e. "felt stigma"). Yet, they might also have internalised it into their identity (i.e. "internalised stigma") before ever become a mother. In this subsection, the situations in which mothers in this study have experienced stigmatisation are examined.

In most of the mothers' cases, they expressed that they actually felt mortified about telling their friends of their pregnancy and the failure of their relationships. They had anticipated there would be a sense of awkwardness when revealing the truth or telling sad stories to their friends, which resulted in some of them deliberately ceasing contact with them. That is, they decided to hide the child, so as to avoid difficult situations and also because to some extent they felt ashamed. Below are two of the examples based on the data collection from the ecomaps, demonstrating how their network of friendships shrank after they separated from their boyfriends.

I used to support the LGBT movements, but after I became a single mother I've stayed low profile since. I didn't contact anyone I knew before, even my gay friends. I retreated completely and I didn't want them to know I'm a single mother now. (...) Maybe because I don't want to show my weakness in front of them. I was playing a role of a helper.

(Gue-fen)

(Before becoming pregnant) We [her former colleagues and her] were still in contact. We would go out for a chat or so. But now they don't know about my situation. (...) After I became pregnant I hid myself from them. Nobody could find me.

(Yi-hsiu, a 26-year-old mother with a four-month-old son)

From the narratives above, it is clear that one of the possible disadvantages of becoming a single mother is losing friends. In Yi-hsiu's case, she was too ashamed to let anyone know, so she hid herself away from the previous friends. Moreover, like Gue-fen, she used to play the role of a supporter to some of her friends, thus refusing to give them the impression she was vulnerable or lost by cutting off her ties with them.

However, if the friendship remained in place, but the other party made critical comments or exhibited stigmatising behaviours, then the mother would easily feel disappointed and the quality of the friendship is very likely to change. Shu-fen, for example, had two friends who could help her when a sudden financial need came up, but in reality, they did not deliver when she needed them. Here, she describes her impressions on these two friends after she experienced being refused for asking some help.

They came to see me and said oh I looked so pitiful. I'm in a situation of only one parent taking care of one child [laughs], and then both of us are ill or something like that. They encouraged me a bit, but...really, when you see them at the first time they always say, 'Oh, you can come to me if you need anything.' But when there's something really urgent happening, they're like...[clicks her tongue] (...) It made me think you're just doing something superficial, not sincerely here to help.

(Shu-fen)

Once Shu-fen had decided to stop contacting them because of the humiliation, they approached her and said, *'did you find a sponsor so you no longer need us?'* in a rather unkind way. This led her to not wishing to demean herself by interacting with them further. However, she also admitted to me that she still needed their financial help when her son demanded something urgently in school so she could not really distance herself from them.

In terms of the networks with colleagues, as they mostly quit their jobs after finding out that they were pregnant (as pointed out in Subsection 6.1.1), some of the former colleagues often became their current friends who could offer some emotional support. For example, Jo-yu told me about her ex-colleague: how this colleague comforted her when her partner showed reluctance to hold a decent wedding ceremony and was offensive to her family. Also, in Yu-chih's case, her ex-colleagues introduced her back to her previous job and thus,

she could rejoin the labour market. However, if they began a new job after the child's birth, there was struggle in many cases to decide whether their current colleagues should know about their real identity of being a single mother. Hsueh-chu, for example, did not want to hide her situation from her employers, because she believed it was her right to claim some benefits from work. However, she realised that she could not bear her new colleagues' comments as they added to her stress at work. In the end, she decided not to talk about it in her current job and focused on her work as one of her coping strategies. This appears to be a combination of Herek's (2009) concepts of 'felt stigma' and 'internalised stigma', whereby Hsueh-chu internalised her fear of being stigmatised after the explanation of her situation and adopted a strategy of not telling or sharing the true story.

6.2.3 Responses from neighbours, relatives and others

In contrast to the support obtained from the networks of friendship and colleagues, most of the mothers in this study faced relatively negative comments from their neighbours and/or distant relatives who they were less likely to hide themselves away from. As some of the mothers returned to stay with their family after giving birth to their child, they could not avoid certain challenging questions being directly put by the neighbours who had seen them growing up. Gue-fen, for example, knew that her situation would become well known by her neighbours when she decided to move back to her old family house. She knew that in her area what happened in every household would be common knowledge to others. However, in her case, she did not experience severe stigma, only becoming a subject of gossiping. When she mentioned her mother might tell them the wrong stories in relation to the child's father, she showed her strong determination in dealing with the relationship with neighbours explicitly, *'I don't care about what they think. This is my business. I said hi to them and they said hi to me, and that's enough. My heart will remain open'*. In some of the mother's cases, their neighbours directly criticised them, especially if their family lived in an old neighbourhood with strong traditional values and Hiao-li's family's neighbours were one such example. Below, Hiao-li describes how her parents were told off by their neighbours,

They were looking at you like you like an unmarried mother. (...) I moved out from my house because of this. (...) It is because of my neighbours, they said very bad things about me and said my mother didn't teach me very well. They said to my parents, 'how

did you teach your child?', as most of them living around our house belong to the older generations.

(Hiao-li)

Apart from their neighbours, who were geographically fixed and not easy to avoid, some of their distant relatives also commented on these mothers without hesitation when they found out about their 'misbehaviour'. Some thus chose to hide themselves from hostile relatives to avoid unhelpful criticism. In some other cases, when such relatives were told about the situation (very often by their parents) and were expected to offer some ideas to help deal with the matter, they were the ones who stood beside these mothers, whilst others put pressure on them to have an abortion or to give the child up for adoption. The latter one occurred in Hsuan-hsuan's case, when her mother complained about her decision to her grandmother and aunt (on her mother's side). Here is their conversation and her reply.

(It was because) my grandma said directly that I should have an abortion and my aunt also said, 'What if you're going to marry a rich guy one day? You won't have a chance because you have a child with you. Who is going to marry you like that?' They really said things in a very demeaning way. Words like 'she [Hsuan-hsuan's daughter]'s a bastard' came out, too. I felt this is really unfair and demeaning.

(Hsuan-hsuan)

It is not only the neighbours or relatives who liked to give their opinions on the mothers' 'misbehaviour'. For instances it emerged that the new girlfriend of the child's father, also participated in this flow of criticism, as they felt their rights were being violated by what they saw as the selfish actions of these mothers. From the experiences of mothers in this study, these 'girlfriends' would call and harass them even after they broke up with the child's father. This involvement of a third party made the relationship between the mother and the child's father even more complicated. In Yi-hsiu and in Yu-mei's cases, the child's father's new girlfriends were supporting them in claiming the child back. Here, Yu-mei talks about her experience of being disturbed by the new girlfriend.

His girlfriend called me at 4 am in the morning and began to fire off. It might be because they were having a fight and her anger was moved onto me. She said it was all because of me that she was so pitiful. She was abused by him [the child's father]

and me at the same time. (...) Actually I didn't abuse her. It's just that I was negotiating with her not to ask my son to call her mother.

(Yu-mei)

Yu-mei emphasised her intention was to 'negotiate' as she thought it was important for her son to know who is his genuine biological mother was. However, the new girlfriend thought she was being rebuked when she was told not to mislead Yu-mei's son.

From Yu-mei's narratives, a picture emerges of how some couples' sense of affection was entangled with roles expected in the Taiwanese context. In some of these mothers' cases, there was no clear division between the old relationship and the new relationship, and the new girlfriend would anxiously claim that she and partner were the rightful parents of the child. Along with the challenges from the neighbourhood, it is evident that many of the mothers in this research needed to deal with various layers of relational burden, which relentlessly challenge their lives after they became a mother. The above has shown the forces in Taiwanese society in terms of relations between relatives, neighbours and others that have contributed to the stigmatised experiences of many of the mothers in this research. Next, the role of some professionals in furthering this process is discussed.

6.2.4 Responses from the relevant professionals

As Cheng (2000) pointed out in her findings in relation to single mothers' experience when applying for welfare benefits, the family and welfare ideological stance of gate keepers, namely, the officials who conduct the mean-tested regulations in practice, can significantly affect the eligibility of the applicants. That is, these people, being members of Taiwanese society hold the same family values, are very likely to result in them influencing the work in a negative way when dealing with these mothers. The quite obvious example of such behaviour I heard from these mothers is what happened to Hsuan-hsuan. She described to me how she and her mother were challenged by a female officer who was supposed to help them with the process of application in the local administrative office (district office in the Taiwanese context).

The official in the district office asked my mother and said..., 'why didn't you ask your daughter to have an abortion?', 'how do you know about this assistance?', 'why don't you ask your daughter to have an abortion as the money from the assistance is enough

(to do it)...'. And finally she said, 'if she was my daughter I'd ask her to have an abortion.' I was so pissed off when I heard that. I felt...how can you say something like that?! And she also told me, 'you might not pass with this application because you're too young.'

(Hsuan-hsuan)

Hsuan-hsuan was angry, but adamant, in her attitude towards applying for the resources when she replied to the official saying, *'I know everyone should take our own responsibility to live along and shouldn't become other people's burden. It is just now I need the resource badly'*. Ssu-yao, on the other hand, referring to a less hostile scenario, told me about her embarrassing experience when an official raised her voice while asking for more information regarding benefits for single-parent families from her colleagues in the district office at the moment she was seeking support. It seems to her these officers actually had poor knowledge about what they were entitled to in terms of benefits.

Other mothers reported the similar situation when they sought help. Several of the mothers commented that they had had to search for welfare benefits on the Internet, so as to appraise themselves of what resources were accessible. This, resulted in a situation where sometimes they found they were more aware of the correct information than the staff in the local administrative office when they went to apply for benefits. It happened that after telling the officials they are not married, they were mistakenly introduced to the resources available for teenage mothers. For example, Hui-Chiao was referred to one of the main NGOs, which works with teenage mothers in Taiwan, after she phoned the department of social welfare in her city to enquire whether there is any subsidy for single mothers. She explained the process of the conversation and it seems the terminology of 'unmarried mothers' or 'single mothers' in the public sector has a special meaning.

The department of social welfare seems to categorise themselves too much. I asked them, 'If I'm a single mother, what kind of subsidies I could apply for?' And then she said, are you divorced or? And I said, 'I haven't got married yet.' And then the officer said to me, 'Oh, then you're an unmarried mother not a single mother.' (...) They said to me, 'we don't have services or benefits for unmarried mothers. If you need anything,

you might need to call the Garden of Hope Foundation (GHF)⁴⁹.’ (...) And then the GHF told me I’m already 28 and not like a teenager. One of their service was to do with adoption. And then I said it directly, ‘No need, thank you.’

(Hui-Chiao)

As for the professionals who provided close services to the mothers who needed assistance, it appears that only one of the mothers in this study commented that her social worker was not very supportive. Yu-mei told me that her social worker was new and maybe lacked experience in connecting people in need to resources, when she asked for help. Here is an example when she told me about her frustration when seeking support from her current social worker.

The current social worker, I don’t have so much to ask her because when I asked she didn’t seem to know anything. Once I asked her to help me with something and I found out she had lied to me. She didn’t help but she said she had, and then after that I found myself not trusting her anymore.

(Yu-mei)

From the narratives above, it could be seen that these mothers’ decision had placed some negative impacts on their social networks, and in return, how the social network had responded accordingly. The power of social norms exerted not only on these mothers’ lives but also the family, the community and the society she grew up and stayed with. Moreover, through formal/visible institutions such as the benefits provided by the state, and informal/invisible/cultural-related regulations, these mothers’ beliefs and behaviours were constrained. It appears that the process of Individualisation is inevitably slowed down by this force, and the complete emancipation is not yet accomplished for these mothers in the Taiwanese society. However, in the end of this section, a case should be raised to see whether the level of individualisation could help with lowering the level of stigmatisation.

⁴⁹ As mentioned in Chapter 2, it is an NGO that has been offering support to teenage mothers or regarding issues relevant to disadvantaged women in Taiwan for more than 30 years.

6.3 Summary of this chapter

This chapter has focused on the financial and relational challenges that many of the never-married mothers in Taiwan encountered in their lives and the consequences of these challenges. At the individual level, these mothers had to manage their lives with their child(ren) on their own in a practical sense after they decided to become a mother. They struggled financially as they were relatively vulnerable in the labour market when comparing to men and their female counterparts, i.e. women who married or single without any child. Moreover, they had to find a balance between daily childcare tasks and work when their children were young, if they were lucky enough to sustain employment. At the structural level, many were on the edge of being excluded from their existing social networks when their family or communities went against them for such reasons as not being a well behaved daughter, a proper woman, or a good mother. This situation in many cases led to problems to do with lack of informal resources and carrying a sense of shame as feeling stigmatised when they tried to move forwards with their child(ren). Finally, at the institutional level, the state also created a predicament for some of these mothers when it should have been offering support as it claimed to be doing, but instead, was the cause of conflict and unfairness. In particular regarding the latter, the mean-tested system could take into account mothers' unhelpful family members as one of their resources and reject their applications from those who were really in need. Moreover, the governmental staff and relevant professionals often brought their personal prejudices regarding these mothers when they sought help, when they were supposed to be neutral and supportive, which could have contributed another layer of stigma for these mothers to negotiate. In addition to the barriers to individualisation brought to light in Chapter 5, it would also seem that the issues surrounding the stigmatising process discussed in this chapter further hinder the chances of many of the never-married mothers from becoming individualised. For, only a small number with relatively higher social status could achieve partially this target through a long, and often painful, self-reflexive process.

From the described challenges, it can be seen that not only gender (being a woman), but also, traditions (being in the Confucian context) have exerted their influence on these mothers' lives. These situations have acted as constraints to their capability of developing their agency and hence, hindered some of them from imagining their future lives. As they always had to seek a secured status owing to their decision to become a mother without

getting married, it could be said that there is as yet minimum individualisation occurring in the current Taiwanese society. However, to cope with these troubles in life, some of them developed various strategies to deal with both financial and social-relational difficulties. In the next chapter, these strategies are examined to explore whether there was any sign of individualisation when these mothers were facing the consequences of becoming a never-married single mother. Moreover, the difference between these mothers in terms of the structural level, in particular – class, are also identified so as to shed light on how the different backgrounds of never-married single mothers can lead to their having different levels of ability when it comes to managing the challenges in their lives.

Chapter 7 How They Managed: the Differences Amongst Never-married Single Mothers

Following the discussion from the previous chapters, it is now appropriate to address the third research objective – to examine how the focal women are managing their current lives. To achieve this objective, in this chapter, the management strategies of these never-married single mothers are scrutinised under the lens of agency and stigma, drawing on Lister (2004) and Goffman's (1963) (Section 7.1) work, to see how these focal mothers deploy their resources to deal with their daily lives. Moreover, the factors that result in discrepancy amongst these mothers will be identified. In Section 7.2, three categories of identities are formed after the characteristics of 30 subjects are revisited. Under the indicators that help to identify different levels of individualisation happening amongst these focal mothers, it can be seen how structure and agency work during the decision-making and managing process. Six in-depth case studies are provided to shed light on the differences amongst these never-married single mothers, which explain the different nature of the confronter, negotiator and survivor categories identified.

7.1 Management strategies and the emerging diversity

In this section, the management strategies these mothers adopted to deal with their economic and social-relational problems are explored. First, this is discussed under the framework of agency, which Lister (2004) addressed in order to understand the actions from the poor to the either 'getting by', 'getting out', 'getting back at', or 'getting organised', when facing poverty in their lives. Later, in Subsection 7.1.2, the stigma management strategies from these focal mothers are identified and discussed to highlight the crucial issue of this group of mothers, whereby they were struggling to hide or cover themselves from the rest of society, whilst only very few of them showed their possession of sufficient strength to fight for t supportive treatment in the future. Finally, in subsection 7.1.3, the factors that might generate the variations amongst these mothers are extracted and discussed.

7.1.1 The Economic Management Strategies: Agency

It can be seen that the economic management strategies discussed in Chapter 3 emerged in

the previous chapters. They often assessed themselves financially when deciding to keep the child or not (Subsection 5.4.1) and when they chose to raise it, they had to put the plan into action after the child's birth (Section 6.1). If these focal mothers were keen to work and earn their living independently, they would have to remain in a decent paying job and find a proper childcare source, either amongst their family or from the available childcare facilities/childminder. If they could not rejoin the labour market immediately, they would have to depend on other resources such as their family's informal support or formal input from the state, and be the main child carers for their children. Some of them did share with me that during this stringent time, they had to watch their daily expenses closely or even ignore some of the bills when they could not afford to pay them.

The (financial) pressure kicked in. After pregnancy it became worse. You need to pay for the infant formula and napkins. I didn't have any savings when I was pregnant. Everything became more difficult.

(Hiao-bing)

We had to struggle a bit, like in some urgent moments, you will feel like you keep running into a brick wall. I had greater pressure when my eldest daughter just entered the university. She needed cash everyday, but you couldn't get a loan for some of these expenses! Also, like last month, someone came to cut off the electricity. Normally, I ask my friends to lend me some money first. Life is very tough for us.

(Su-lan)

This is very much in accord with what Lister (2004) terms the strategy of 'getting by'. These women somehow had to operationalise all kinds of resources around them to cope with everyday financial difficulties. However, given the Confucian context, some of the family's of these mothers considered that they had violated certain social norms and so, apparently placed sanctions on them, in terms of finance or housing, in order to punish them and protect their own interests. Moreover, the resources from the state were scarce, with residual support being available only for the poorest, which resulted in these mothers struggling with their everyday lives when they tried to 'get by'.

For some of the mothers who were able to continue their work, they remained very positive about sustaining their lives with their children in the future, never thinking they would

have to face poverty. Hsiu-li, for instance, is one of the mothers who was determined to work after the child's birth. Whilst her relationship with her ex-boyfriend had changed subsequent to this and she had to take care of her child on her own for a while, she told me that she definitely intended to work in the future.

Look at the small amount of money we have from the government. We need money to deal with everything, and you can't count on the government always. So, I'm just taking care of her myself this period of time, while her health is not good. After the Chinese New Year and with more opportunity out there, I will go out looking for work.

(Hsiu-li)

She was one of the mothers with a strong belief in her capacity to work and provide for herself and her child. Some of the mothers, on the other hand, focused more on their children's future, given that they had experienced a stressful period of time and would not want their children to face similar adversity that they had. Hsueh-chu, for instance, told me how she urged her son to perform better in school and to pursue a better education.

I'm protecting my children, especially my son. I don't want them to experience what I have experienced. Although I am worried I might have some unhelpful thoughts like I wish he could be more independent, building up his own target of life and etc, I still want to (adjust him). Yeah, because I've been through these. If you don't plan it earlier, you will have difficulties in the future. For example, I couldn't get funding for my further degree. So, I was thinking, 'oh, only if I could have got it when I was younger'. And my son doesn't think like that. He doesn't think that at my age if I'm going to work and study at the same time it is tiring.

(Hsueh-chu)

Apart from them, as discussed in Chapter 5, some mothers bore with higher marital expectations for their future. That is, they looked forward to a new partner or reunite with the child's father, who are expected to provide for their lives with their children. However, as Leisering and Leibfried (1999) pointed out, the structural and cultural backgrounds are keys to these strategies, which can assist or obstruct the exercise of people's agency. For instance, it cannot be ensured that Hsueh-chu's children will successfully manage the difficulties like children with better background and resources. As a single mother,

Hsueh-chu's unstable history in the labour market also demonstrates how financially vulnerable it can be for a woman who has to take care of her children on her own. This brings to fore the idea of 'getting out', which Lister (2004) indicated pertains to those of the poor who are able to benefit from their interaction with structures that can lead to them leaving poverty behind. It is, therefore, crucial to discuss the differences amongst these types of mothers in the next section.

As to the political/citizenship dimension, the evidence in this thesis of these never-married single mothers using 'getting (back) at' as an agentic action is quite scant. One reason is that, in front of the researcher, they most probably would not show their negative response to the state, such as fighting against it or committing fraud regarding welfare benefits. Very often, the researcher was told that they appreciated the benefits support coming from the state or at most, made complaints about the benefits they received not being enough, rather than criticising or resisting the governance arrangements regarding welfare benefits. However, some of the mothers indeed shared 'Other' people's stories about claiming benefits that they were not actually eligible for which demonstrates a sign of 'Otherness', as identified by Lister (2004). For example, Hsiu-li told the researcher that some of the mothers would apply for emergency allowances from the Act of Families in Hardship in that were eligible under the fourth article, for which only mothers without marriage can apply. After they had claimed the emergency fund (about NTD 35,000) and have passed the 3-month regulation, they would get married. These 'tactics', according to them, are prevalently shared between single mothers who demand state support, in particular, on the online forums. This situation, as Lister (2004) explained, is a manifestation of the poor's 'everyday resistance' to the state or other powerful authorities in their lives. Through these challenging strategies, these focal mothers can in fact exert their agency and survive from their everyday difficulties, in particular the financial ones, under the control of the state or other authorities.

Apart from the strategy of 'getting (back) at', there was almost no evidence that these focal mothers would 'get organised' in order to advocate their rights or negotiate with the state or other resources about their situations. Regarding which, Lister (2004) emphasised how the pressure of shame amongst the poor remains massive, which hinders their forming a categorical identity and thus, being able to act collectively. These focal mothers, similarly, encountered shame, which discouraged them from demanding their rights. They did not

admit to their shame during their interview, but instead, some exhibiting ‘Othering’ attitudes towards some of the other never-married single mothers, who were considered as not being capable or thoughtful like them. The identity of never-married single mothers is, therefore fragmented, which makes it difficult for them to come together and generate an impact on society as a whole. This provides support for Lister (2004) commenting that it is never easy for the strategy of ‘getting organised’ being implemented amongst the poor.

However, there were small signs of ‘getting together’ rather than ‘getting organised’ amongst these focal mothers. Man-chuan, Hsiu-li, Hui-Chiao and Pei-ti were the ones who had sought resources on the Internet forums in order to find information in relation to support and childcare tips, and eventually found friends with similar situations. For Hui-Chiao, instrumental function emerged when she learned some information regarding welfare benefits from friends on the Internet and she could also share with them what she knew in the form of reciprocal support. She described messages exchanged with one of the mothers she knew on the Internet that, *‘she was very kind and because she gave birth earlier than I did, she would offer me for example some knowledge of childrearing. (...) And then I told her about AFH.’* It seems the reciprocal support was not only about emotional support, for it was also about gaining mutual understanding as well as practical knowledge sharing. Moreover, when these mothers found each other anonymously on the Internet, they could hide themselves from the public or the ones who might despise them face-to-face, which provided them with a safe space to reveal their identity. In this way, the strategy of ‘getting organised’ appears to be manifested in a very modest way, namely, they could only ‘get together’. Moreover, it is never in the form of political action that could help to change their lives structurally.

From the four quadrants of agency that Lister (2004) has identified, it seems some of these mothers are more likely to manage their lives personally on a daily basis. Whether they can ‘get out’ of the poverty or the financial burden, the structural factors in the context stood out to influence their agency. As to the political/citizenship dimension, it is hard for them to deploy any strong agentic actions and instead, only exhibit mild signs of them. Thus, it would seem reasonable to conclude that for the vast majority of the focal women in this thesis the process of individualisation is incomplete and in some cases, it has yet to start. This state of affairs is evidenced not only when examining the decision-making process (in Chapter 5), but also, in the context of coping strategies once never-married single mother

status has been adopted.

7.1.2 The Stigma Management Strategies

In Chapter 6, it came across that some of the mothers had to adopt some strategies in order to interact with the outside world after the never-married event. According to Goffman (1963), the concealable characteristics or features that might lead to stigma sometimes involve the strategies of 'information control', which includes hiding or covering the features that are expected to be condemned, or 'passing' when people are mentioning the stigmatised feature. That is, the person who possesses that feature stays silent to let the discussion move on and cool down by nature. Cockrill and Nack (2013) extended these and separated the type of strategies deployed as having three purposes: managing the damaged self, maintaining a good reputation and managing a damaged reputation. In the following subsections the strategies the focal women often used are discussed.

7.1.2.1 Covering, Hiding, and Passing

As discussed in Chapter 6, some of these mothers had to hide or cover up their identity as a never-married single mother in their daily lives. Sometimes in front of their neighbours or colleagues and sometimes in front of their close friends and families. Chih-yun, as a more extreme example, told me that she had been hiding everything from her mother, including the existence of her son, as she believed her mother will never accept him. As an educated woman who always behaved well and performed excellently, she also felt the confession would bring about the collapse of her image in front of her family. This encouraged her to 'maintain a good reputation', in accordance with what Cockrill and Nack (2013) have suggested, before she is ready to face the day when everything becomes exposed.

Yu-chih, on the other hand, is one of the mothers who was asked by her neighbours in the early stages of her single motherhood. Here she talks about how she felt when she was not really ready for questions in relation to her relationship with her partner, which initially failed and then two years later was re-established.

I felt quite hurt at the beginning, as they [the neighbours] asked, 'why you're still here after you're married?' Or something like, 'why aren't you at your husband's house?' They would ask something like that and I could only say, 'Oh, that's because my husband went to work in Hualien and there's nobody at the house, so it's better I

stay here [with my family].'

(Yu-chih)

In Yu-chih's case and with many of the other mothers, their neighbours' curiosity about their unmarried status led to them making up stories to stop them from prying any further into their circumstances. Mei-lan, as well, so as to hide the fact that she was a prostitute, would tell her friends in conversation that she was a divorced mother, or '*the child's father just disappeared*' etc., to escape from any further prying. This resonates with Pong and Wang (2002) discovering that different types of single mothers in the Taiwanese context are looked upon in differing ways. In particular, a widowed mother is considered as being someone to feel pity for, whereas a 'never-married' one is seen as having brought the situation onto herself and therefore, not seen in a good light by most in society. According to Goffman (1963), when he referred to the topic of stigma management, these are typical coping strategies of 'covering' that the mothers in this research adopted to prevent their identity from been 'spoiled'. They need to use another fact or story which can be helpful to cover up their situation, so they did not have to face the judgements from the outside world.

In terms of 'passing', sometimes there is hardly any difference between it and hiding. One example that was clearly presented in some changed to the ecomaps is that these mothers' social networks might shrink, because they would avoid talking with her friends in relation to the event of being a never-married single mother (see Subsection 6.2.2). They obviously could not manage themselves in front of their friends and were more likely to reduce the contact with them when they were not ready to talk. Hsueh-chu, as another example in Chapter 6, encountered a similar situation in her work. She would have liked to claim some benefits from work, but hesitated to do so, because of the exposure of her identity afterwards. She told me,

The column of spouse in my ID card is empty but I have two children. I don't know how to explain this. But I'm quite honest. After telling the truth I found I'd begin to pay attention to people's reaction. I'm very anxious about what they think and how they see me. (...) So I didn't tell my director [her current employer] about the truth (that I'm a single mother) and the subsidies from the low-income family assistance. I just focus on doing my job well.

(Hsueh-chu)

In the end, Hsueh-chu relinquished her right, because she could not bear the negative consequences of revealing herself in front of her current colleagues. Like Hsueh-chu, Ching-ching and Hiao-ting also chose not to reveal their real marital status in front of their current colleagues, only letting them know that they were housewives who were desperately in need of jobs.

The strategies used by these mothers such as hiding themselves, avoiding the truth and ignoring people's comments, as Goffman (1963) and Cockrill and Nack (2013) contended, can be seen as ways to protect their identities and reputations from being harmed or 'spoiled'. Most important of all, as Jarrett (1996) found, these strategies are relatively personal and individual-oriented, which is far from being turned into a collective action to advocate their right in a public scenario. This might hinder the development of their autonomy and dignity. In sum, some of these mothers considered it easier to keep their private lives in secret, rather than submitting themselves to the scrutiny of their social network, which might impact negatively on either their self-esteem or the level of support they were able to receive. This demonstrates the dilemma when these mothers interacted with the outside world, where the constraints were still there and they had to engage in these 'surviving tactics'.

7.1.2.2 Self-realisation, Confronting and Collective Support

In comparison to the mothers who conducted relatively passive strategies, it emerged some of the focal women were quite resolute, whilst others were proactive in facing their situation with a positive demeanour. Wei-chen, as an example of the former, told me her attitude when someone (e.g. a neighbour) asked about her situation.

Those neighbours, aunties, they all cared about what has happened. My attitudes towards this is, 'Okay, I'm now pregnant. And I'm not gonna get married. I chose to give birth to the child and I'm gonna take care of him very well.' My attitude was firm and open, and those people wouldn't worry or make comments about it.

(Wei-chen)

As time moved on, some of the mothers who were not as sure as Wei-chen, began to realise

that not everyone was judgmental about what had happened to them. Moreover, they found there are other people ‘out there’, or even in their closer network, who had experienced a similar situation to what they had. Accordingly, they became cognisant that, *‘it’s not just me’* or *‘there are people in a worse situation than I am’*. In fact, these reflexive thoughts emerged in many mothers’ cases in this research. They would focus on living their lives with their children and in time, managed to engender and maintain a positive attitude about their future. Hsiu-li, for example, said to me she felt happy with her daughter and rejected anyone showing pity towards them, while she was supported by her family and without too much concern at the moment. Moreover, she was one of the mothers who was confident in meeting her requirements herself and obtaining future opportunities in the labour market. Pei-Fang, on the other hand, whilst being worried about whether her son would be accepted when he was in school, she remained optimistic, as she knew there are quite a lot of single-parent families in today’s Taiwanese society. Both of them held the belief that, it was actually not their fault and that the situation would be worse, if they were still together with the child’s father, who in both cases had been involved in affairs. It became evident that some of these mothers were increasingly likely to be alleviated from the pressure of being or feeling condemned and hence, began to reform their once-damaged identities.

What is notable, is that facing the future with optimism was not just apparent among those mothers who were more capable (i.e. sustaining a place in the labour market and/ or with more resources from the family), for it also applied to several of those who were less well endowed. Fang-ling and Hsuan-hsuan, for example, changed their attitudes towards how people might see them for the sake of their daughters. They were not as ashamed as before when seeking the resources and when interacting with friends or neighbours, as they realised that their children were important and innocent regarding what they had had to experience. Hsuan-hsuan also told me that her social worker, indeed, helped her a lot when she was emotionally down. As a result, they endeavoured to change themselves, hoping to offer their children a model for confronting the world. It would seem that in comparison to the mothers with better capacities and informal support, for these mothers their sense of motherhood and what formal support they could muster helped them to put a brave face on their difficult circumstances. However, as is discussed in Section 7.1.2.1, there were some mothers who were in the process of transforming and having managed stigma by ignoring comments, telling white lies and hiding away so as to protect themselves.

However, only on very rare occasions did the focal mothers in this research tell me of their experience of confronting the person who had placed a stigma on them, unless they were explicitly challenged (see Hsuan-hsuan in Subsection 7.2.4). Ya-hsin, was one of those very few who demonstrated how she was fearless regarding other people's comments. She described to me her position when encountering someone's question in relation to her child's rights.

I met so many people who asked me: is it fair to your child? I met so many. I told him, comparing to those two-parents families, my efforts, resources and love for him do not look worse. And I don't understand why you said it's unfair? I saw so many children who got hurt from two-parents families, and I don't see any unfairness in my case. So, that person was told off by me instead! He was so embarrassed! And I said to him that you're using a colourful lens to judge people; it shows that you don't understand the real situation.

(Ya-hsin)

For her, other people's opinions were indeed biased and were not in accord with her situation. As a 38-year-old mother with higher education and a well-paid job, she carefully considered the resources she could offer and the consequences of not getting married. In her opinion, the concept of a 'complete family' was not necessarily a two-parent family, which she was happy to convey to anyone who had challenged her since. However, up to a point she quite consciously would 'Other' other mothers who were younger and less prepared in her opinion, but single like her. Her narrative of becoming a never-married single mother and the structural factors that assisted her decision and her life with her son, are scrutinised in-depth in one of the case studies provided in the next section.

As was mentioned, it is very unlikely to see these focal mothers demonstrating a collective strength due to their spoiled identity of being an never-married mother. Fortunately, some of the mothers in this research received relatively positive feedback and support from their friends with similar experiences, which helped to give them emotional strength. This group of mothers, who tended to be younger in comparison to others in this study, not only benefited from their friendship network when one or two of their core friends remained in their social network, but also gained new friends with similar experiences on the Internet. As Miall (1986) indicated in her research on women with infertility, they tended to reveal

their situation to a trusted person who could be their family, close friend or someone in a similar situation. As mentioned, Man-chuan, Hsiu-li, Hui-Chiao and Pei-ti had sought friends who had the similar circumstances on the Internet. When I asked what it meant to Pei-ti having friends with a similar history, she replied to me that *‘they are like someone I can talk to...Because some of the stuff I wanted to talk is not acceptable to everyone. So they are like a channel that I can pour out all my sorrows to.’* Basically, they could tell each other their sad stories of being abandoned by the child’s father and knew that these would be kept in secret because the listener had had a similar experience to them. When these mothers found each other anonymously on the Internet, they could hide themselves from the public or the ones who might despise them face-to-face, which provided them with a safe space to reveal their identity. Not only as mentioned in the last section that they could obtain instrumental support, but also a sense of sharing the spoiled identity.

The abovementioned management strategies coincide to what Shih (2004) discussed regarding the strategies conducted to overcome stigma. In the ‘empowerment model’, she held that stigmatised individuals might adopt positive strategies to protect themselves and to develop resilience. Specifically, they might compensate their stigmatised situation with other social skills in order to be liked or tend to distant themselves from the stereotype which has been put on them; they might interpret the social environment strategically with selected views, such as only comparing themselves to the similar or worse groups, rather than more advantaged ones; and they might also find the strength in themselves when they own multiple identities (i.e. by valuing the ones which are more accepted in the context). However, she also highlighted that family life and community acceptance would determine whether stigmatised individuals will conduct an empowerment model. To illustrate the importance of the social surroundings further, as Ching-ching commented in the end of her interview, whilst being proud of herself as a ‘self-made mother’ (i.e. raising up her children by her own effort and own money, and being supported by her mother) privately, being unmarried might never be an honourable thing to declare in Taiwanese society.

We said it is a democratic country, but how democratic it is? There’s still a sense of traditions in it. As we know it, so we don’t show off like married women, saying, ‘oh I’m so proud of being unmarried’ or something like that. Our state of mind is totally different for sure.

It is very likely the stigmatised individuals were affected by the cultural ideologies, which were inherited by their families and communities, as well as the state and hence, unconsciously internalised these ideologies into their daily life divisions. This, as Shih (ibid) highlighted, might result in a more negative set of management strategies being conducted, which, as demonstrated in the previous subsection, involves a set of coping strategies to avoid negative consequences.

7.1.3 The differences between these mothers: the advantaged versus the disadvantaged ones

It has been raised as an issue that the never-married single mothers in this research might have to experience different life stories when they were in various structural positions. In Chapter 5, it was highlighted how some of them were in better conditions in terms of the ability to sustain a position in the labour market and support from their social network, such that they could make decisions without too much concern. In Chapter 6, it emerged that such mothers experience less economic and social-relational consequences after becoming a never-married single mother. In Subsections 7.1.1 and 7.1.2, it became evident that mothers with advantaged structural backgrounds (i.e. higher education and thus, greater capability to stay in the labour market) could also develop more agentic strategies in terms of 'getting out' of poverty and/or confronting stigma.

After the discussion regarding the double challenges that these mothers had to face, it is important to raise the question as to whether the levels of financial and relational crisis are identical for all of the mothers in this research. As Rowlingson and McKay (2002) have highlighted, the disadvantaged financial situation of a single mother not only comes from being a woman, but also from class difference. Moreover, as Klett-Davies (2012) has pointed out, whilst the process of individualisation could be happening among lone mothers of any status, it occurs in a more pronounced manner for those with a better structural background. These perspectives accord with several critics' focus on the signs of individualisation (in Subsection 3.1.3), whereby cultural factors, such as traditions and structural factor, including class, are still exerting their influence on people, in particular women, thus hindering this individualisation process. As mentioned in Chapter 4, in the current research there were a few mothers who had experienced higher education and were

relatively capable in the labour market. It is thus appropriate to address the issue of class and ask whether those with higher socioeconomic status were facing fewer financial and socio relational obstacles than those with a lower one. In the next section, mothers with different levels of cultural and structural challenges will be identified and their circumstances investigated.

7.2 Case studies on never-married single mothers with diversities: three idiosyncratic groups

To address the third objective further, I identify three categories in this chapter to exemplify how a certain group of mothers deployed their resources and capabilities to deal with the decision-making process to become mothers as well as how they managed their lives after they became a mother. Drawing on the framework introduced by Klett-Davies (2012), together with the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 3, in this section I present three categories to divide mothers in this study according to their level of individualisation. However, unlike Klett-Davies (2012), who generated three categories inductively by adopting the concept of sense of coherence (SOC)⁵⁰, for this research the level of individualisation and the structural factors that can have an impact on the outcome of these mothers' lives, are applied as the index of categorisation. Based on discussions of Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) regarding the reflexive life style in late modernity, the signs of detraditionalisation and women's limitations with respect to the process of individualisation, this categorisation can help to identify whether or not these mothers' lives:

- had become financially more independent;
- involved a more detraditionalised life style;
- were reflexive in making their life decisions;

while encountering the pivotal life event in their lives of becoming a never-married single

⁵⁰ According to Antonovsky (1987), this refers to the situation where people who are facing certain difficulties would feel they are confident enough to 1) understand the stressor; 2) obtain the resources and deal with it; and 3) are capable of considering whether the difficulties are worthwhile tackling. These then formed the three indices of SOC: comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness, where comprehensibility refers to whether a person is able to have a proper understanding of the stressor. Manageability denotes that the person could be capable of managing the demands and meaningfulness refers to how the person finds the motivation to confront the difficulties.

mother. Moreover, the structural factors that had an influence on these mothers' decision-making and life outcomes are also taken into account. It has been revealed that the different factors, such as family ideologies and class, have become interwoven to result in some of them being in better financial and social-relational conditions than others. Clearly, the configuration of these factors would appear to be linked with the level of individualisation on these women, rather than irrelevant ideas which Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) claimed. In the following subsections, the characteristics of these different groups of mothers are investigated.

7.2.1 Characteristics of Different Groups of Mothers

Following the indicators which help to identify the difference, in this section, the focal mothers who encompassed similar features according to these three level of individualisation are categorised into three identities: confronters (4), negotiators (18) and survivors (8)⁵¹. Their characteristics are discussed in the following sections.

7.2.1.1 High level of individualisation: confronters

After closely look at the 30 mothers in this research, four mothers⁵² are identified as confronters. Mothers with the highest level of individualisation in this study showed several distinguishing characteristics when compared to the other mothers. First of all, they took a proactive position when seeking the solution to their problematic relationship with the child's father. That is, the break-up of the relationship was mostly initiated by the mother after consideration of what she really wanted from a relationship, for example in Ssu-ting's case. Once they found out they were pregnant, they informed the child's father, but did not expect him to take any further responsibility. Next, they would consider the practicality of whether they could afford a child of their own and whether their family would accept their decision. One of these two might outweigh the other. For example, Wei-chen expected her family to love and accept the child even she could raise up the children by herself. '*Otherwise the child would be too pitiful*', she said. For her, if her family did not accept the child, she might have chosen to have an abortion.

Thirdly, when making the decision to keep the child, they did so by weighing up their

⁵¹ There are more negotiators than confronters or survivors in this study, which is very likely due to the snowball sampling strategy that this researcher adopted.

⁵² They are Ren-fon, Ssu-ting, Wei-chen and Ya-hsin.

chances of remaining in the labour market and they had positively resolved this matter by staying in work. This resonates with Wu (2007b), whose research elicited that Taiwanese mothers have begun to insert employment into their motherhood identity, either because of their economic needs or their preference to continue with their career. In particular, this is the case with those who are at younger age and middle class. It was very rare to find these mothers being in need of welfare benefits or being eligible for them, as they were more likely to be highly educated with a decent job and sufficient family support. As for choosing a new partner, these mothers appeared to have higher expectations than others, and they would require any new partner to accept the child and as well as being financially capable of supporting the family unit. Otherwise, they were happy to stay single and to live just with their children. Finally, they tended to adopt self-justifying and self-defending strategies to deal with their experience of stigma. Like Ren-fon's case, she insisted '*it's other people's problem if they discriminate against us*'. Sometimes the mechanism of 'Othering'⁵³, as discussed by Lister (2004) in relation to poverty, had also become a strategy to prevent themselves from being perceived as never-married mothers who often bear the stereotyped images of recklessness, irresponsibility and ignorance. Given these characteristics, I have designated these mothers as 'confronters' as they were well resourced and were confident in confronting some of the consequences that arose when they became never-married mothers.

7.2.1.2 Middle level: negotiators

The 'negotiators' in this study refers to a group of mothers who had faced periods of financial deprivation and had experienced social stigma which they had to negotiate frequently so as to maintain their self-esteem. However, as the available resources were sufficient or the potential for obtaining them a perceived reality, they were reasonably confident that they would be able to manage their lives in the future. Amongst all the 30 focal mothers, 18 of them are categorised as negotiators⁵⁴. While the confronters appeared to opt for autonomy rather than continue with an unsatisfactory relationship, negotiators tended to end their relationships only when their partners were unfaithful and/or not willing to share the childrearing burden. That is, only when the basic requirement of the

⁵³ To emphasise its symbolic meaning, Lister (2004) capitalised the 'O' (p.101).

⁵⁴ They are Gue-fen, Ching-ching, Hiao-ting, Hui-chiao, Yue-shia, Man-chuan, Shui-lien, Jo-yu, Ssu-yao, Hiao-bing, Chia-chia, Hueh-chu, Pei-fang, Chih-yunm Yu-chih, Pei-ti, Hsuan-hsuan, and Hsui-li.

relationship, trust, was violated would they consider separation. However, in Geu-fen and Hsueh-chu cases, even though their partners broke this trust, they were still hoping to reunite with the child's father, so that their children would financially secure and that there would be a complete family again. In general, they had a higher tendency of keeping the child initially than other mothers, seldom considering the alternatives of having abortion or putting the child up for adoption, and often expressed that their hopes of being a mother had affected them for a long time. Whilst they did take their own financial situation and support from their family into consideration, their desire to be a mother had become the most salient impetus for them to keep the child. This very much coincides with what Klett-Davies (2012) referred to as a 'professional mother', who believes motherhood is her destiny, rather than an inflexible responsibility or role that women should take or play. This also had huge impacts on their choice of a potential partner, who had to accept the child first, before any relationship could be established. In terms of future expectation, in Pei-fang's case, she believed she could afford her life with her son, even though it would be tough. Moreover, according to Hsiu-li, whilst not in the labour market as she was caring her daughter, she knew she would rejoin the labour market again, as she had experience and was adequate. For both of them, their advancing age and the hope to be mothers became the main driver for them to negotiate their potential resources, which included their family's ability, the state's attitude and even their cohabitants' perceptions, to some extent, for solving their financial and relational challenges.

Finally, their overall responses towards the stigma they had envisaged they might face in the beginning when deciding to have their child had eased over time. They utilised relatively more information control tactics to 'hide', 'cover' and 'pass' their true stories in front of people initially. However, with time, as Yue-shia reflected on her experience, she found actually that *'nobody really cares and normally forget what you said'*, and thus, she came to have a more relaxed attitude towards other people's opinions. For these mothers, I contend that they needed to negotiate for resources under the traditional expectation of women being mothers. However, eventually many of them had come to the view that being unconventional mothers was quite acceptable for their children.

7.2.1.3 Low level: survivors

For mothers who managed just to 'survive', the challenges were far more complex than for

the others. Eight out of 30 mothers are identified as the survivors⁵⁵. They might know the child's father through jobs that requested them to 'sell' their sexuality or through casual sex and their relationships were never established, for example Ching-hua and Mei-lan. After embarking on an insecure relationship, stories of affairs, lack of money, alcohol or domestic violence were often told. Once the relationship had completely broken down, it was highly likely they would seek re-partnering for future security. At the point of separation, they would regularly attribute this to the unsuitability of the child's fathers or the demanding parent-in-law. Many were too frightened to have an abortion (i.e. reasons of killing a life or the infant's spirit living on) or said they would have felt guilty if they had given the child away.

As to the impact of never-married motherhood on their personal relationships, some of their families put pressure on them, and felt ashamed of them, rather than offering support. Even when the family was supportive, it was normally very restricted support in terms of providing finance or childcare. They would, thus, often need to deal with the financial situation by applying for and depending on welfare benefits, plus, in some cases subsidies from NGOs.

Very few had been able to obtain a full-time job that covered the cost of childcare, rent and living expenditure. In other cases, they had to be a full-time mother and depended on their male family members or cohabitants for finance, often unwillingly, as they were the only suitable child carer for their child. With regards to dealing with the experience of being stigmatised, they would often internalise the shame and felt mortified because of their family, friends, relatives and neighbours' hostile attitudes when revealing their identities as never-married mothers, a negativity that was even found amongst some officials. It was taking time and there was a need for genuine support from their social network, if they were to regain their self-esteem and be content with lives with the lives they were living with their children.

To demonstrate these different types of mothers who are with different backgrounds, various level of resources and agentic/pessimistic strategies to manage daily challenges, in the following subsections, case studies are discussed according to two aspects: firstly, whether to keep the child and become a single mother; and secondly, how they managed

⁵⁵ They are Fang-ling, Ching-hua, Yi-hsiu, Mei-lan, Su-lan, Hiao-li, Shu-fen and Yu-mei.

their lives after becoming a mother..

7.2.2 Cases of mothers deciding whether to keep the child and become a single mother

- ***Case of Ya-hsin: a reflexive mother with abilities (a confronter)***

Ya-hsin, a 38-year-old mother with a one-year-old son, is one of the mothers who had a Master's degree and a professional job in this research. She met the child's father at work, but the relationship ended before she found herself pregnant. Here she talks the relational history with the child's father.

I don't know why we were attracted to each other, for he actually wasn't popular among my colleagues. Before I found I was pregnant, I had had some arguments with him already and had kind of broken up with him. After this (pregnancy) happened, he showed his true face. He didn't want to take any responsibility. I left the company for him. There were so many people guessing the reason why I left and stuff, but I didn't tell anyone. I just found myself another job and then found I was pregnant and gave birth to the child.

(Ya-hsin)

As mentioned Subsection 5.3.2.3, she was also one of the mothers who had her say about the end of the relationship. When Ya-hsin found after she broke up with her partner that she was pregnant, she expected him to take some responsibility for child care, but this was not the case. After being rejected with a reason for 'not wanted to be married to a woman who have already pregnant', she made up her mind to take care of the pregnancy on her own.

After making sure that the child's father was unwilling to share in the childrearing, the task of making decisions was handed over to her. She told me that when she found out about the pregnancy, her initial feeling was to have an abortion. However, owing to her previous experience of nearly having a miscarriage during the early stages of pregnancy and subsequent words from her gynaecologist (Regarding this, the gynaecologist rather pointedly said '*Do you know how many women want to have a child at your age but can't?*'), she started to think maybe she should keep the child. These two events

underpinned her decision to keep the child, and as a result, she said to her mother⁵⁶, who to start with had been opposed to her idea of having the child, *‘I saw him so lively after I almost had a miscarriage, it’s not possible to make the decision to have an abortion.’*

After gaining the permission and support from her mother and other siblings, she started to think about whether she could make it as a mother on her own. Here, she talks about the combination of reasons for giving birth to her son.

My earnings are higher than average compared with office workers in general, so I could offer better resources than other single mothers. (...) For women who are confronted this situation, they might go forward with having an abortion. But I felt my personality didn’t allow me to do that. (...) As I felt I had to take responsibility for what happened, too. So I felt from my perspective I should bear the burden. So I took account of my age and my (financial) situation (and hence the childbirth).

(Ya-hsin)

From her narrative, two crucial points appear to have affected the decision to keep the child, namely, her financially secure position. Secondly, her sense of responsibility. As a mother older in age and higher in terms of class status, she mentioned to me several times that when compared to younger mothers or mothers who are relatively more disadvantaged in social and economic resources, she felt she was in a stronger position meet the responsibilities that her circumstances dictated. Her opinion of other mothers with worse ‘conditions’ was that they were *‘too selfish’* and *‘their children are gonna suffer’*, is consistent with the reaction that Lister (2004) identified, whereby the poor are consciously or unconsciously ‘Othered’. This also resonates with Goffman (1963) pointing to the reaction of ‘ambivalence’, whereby such mothers might condemn other single mothers for enhancing the stereotype and thus worsening their reputation. Here, in Ya-hsin’s case, clearly, it is never-married single motherhood that she wanted to distance herself from. As mentioned in Subsection 7.1.2.2, she once confronted someone who questioned her choice

⁵⁶ On her ecomaps, it could be seen that the scale and the compositions of her social networks did not change very much. Despite having quit her job, she still visited her previous colleagues from time to time. Her mother did not agree with her choice at the beginning but fully accepted the child afterwards. However, her family remained in the second ring as they were living in different cities. The clear change of her network pertained to her increasing interaction with neighbours, who she relied on for some occasional childcare support.

would exploit her son from obtaining such family with strong defence by contrasting her and other two-parents family. She insisted to me, *‘I had capability, my family and I gave lots of love to him. Other two-parents might have their own problem.’*

From her case, it emerged that it is very likely the mothers possessed sufficient resources, greater sense of ‘responsibility’, sufficient support from the family, and if there were other concerns such as age limitations, they were more likely to keep the children out of wedlock. It seems signs of individualisation emerged in Ya-hsin’s case strongly that she considered the overall picture and the consequence of her life with her son. Through this reflexive process, she became confident that she would have her own sufficient resources and with the support of her family, at this point, she perceived that she had nothing to worry about.

- ***Case of Pei-fang: a strong drive of wanting to be a mother (a negotiator)***

Pei-fang, a 39 years old mother with a 6-month-old son, met her partner through a mutual friend, and were together for two years. Pei-fang had no idea that he was married and unfortunately everything was revealed after the child’s father’s wife began to blackmail her after she was pregnant. She did not blame the friend who had introduced her, but thought it was no other person’s business when a relationship is developing. For her, it was not appropriate to check up on his ID⁵⁷ to make sure he was not married during their relationship, because she believed the relationship should be based on trust.

Despite the breakup of the relationship, Pei-fang had desired to have a family of her own for a long time. Here, she explains the desire:

Because I knew I was quite old (for childbearing), when I had a child I prefer to keep him rather than giving him away. (...)I thought about having a family. The thought has always been like that and never changed. It was because of him [the child’s father] the thought couldn’t be put into practice. (...) But, I still wanted to give birth to him [her son], to fulfil the wish of having a family.

(Pei-fang)

⁵⁷ The ID card in Taiwan contains personal information including status of marriage. It is sometimes taken as evidence for couples who considering getting married to make sure that their partners are single without a spouse.

In addition to reasons of age, she focused on the meaning for her of having a family when she became pregnant. However, her partner could not offer her a stable relationship with marriage, or fulfil the role of father to her son. Unlike the mothers who remained in the extramarital relationship and waited for the man to sort his marriage out, she chose to raise her son on her own after the child's father did not show any intention to share the childcare burden together and disappeared. She told me her current attitude towards this relationship was, *'I'll take this as one piece of little bad thing happening in this life and will forget about it. And it will be all his business that he's not going to participate in our lives.'* In her case, it seems the standard of a relationship she abided by was based on the expectation of a man's role in Confucian society, for she emphasised several times in the interview that, *'it is not my fault'* and *'I'm the victim'* to show that the child's father's 'wrong doing' was the main cause of the failure of the relationship. However, it should be noted that to her the relationship should be 'pure', equal and realistic as Giddens (1992) recommended, rather than romantic or unequal in terms of what it delivers to each partner. Losing trust in him had contributed to the unsatisfying relationship and hence, to the end of it. It appears that she possess a principle in her mind, which is rather traditional, to support her unconventional action in the future.

The fact of being cheated on and abandoned had not defeated Pei-fang, because of her family's support and her capability of sustaining her life on her own. Her relationship with her family was not good and put massive pressure on her. The low quality of relationship even prompted her to establish a family of her own. However, after the childbirth the family relationship became tight and reciprocal⁵⁸. Whilst they could not support her financially, the physical support, such as arranging childcare when they could, and their wholehearted backing to her decision to become a mother, really benefited her.

In terms of her own ability, she talked about how she weighed up her financial situation.

I was not in the situations like ...not being able to be self-sufficient or self-supplied economically. I'm still quite capable of taking care of him. (I only know) It'll just a bit tougher and there'll be more pressure.

⁵⁸ It emerged on her two ecomaps that the closeness of her family increased (from the second to the first ring) since they knew that she was pregnant, I could therefore investigate in-depth based on the visual difference.

What is unique in Pei-fang's case, is that she was the only mothers who did not quit her job and instead, applied for maternity and parental leave through the Gender Equality in Employment Law (GEEL) scheme. Fortunately, her employer was an old friend of her father's, who was willing to allow her to negotiate her time off for maternity leave. She reported how the GEEL had helped her financially during her maternity leave, but after she returned to work she had to find the resources for child care from her own income. This is one of the examples where the state offered a larger degree of freedom at the institutional level and contributed to the concept of 'institutional individualism', or perhaps more like 'institutional familism' in a Taiwanese context, which resonates with Chang and Song (2010) contention that the choices available are determined by institutions in the modern world. However, it is also of note that, in Pei-fang's case, her social bond with her employer was strong enough to nurture the decision, and later on, the childcare needs still left her no choice to seek resources from the welfare system.

- *Case of Yi-hsiu: a victim of familial ideologies (a survivor)*

Yi-hsiu, a 26-year-old mother with a four-month-old son, is presented as a case of a mother losing her autonomy, whereby the child's father's family had the ultimate power over her and her son throughout the relationship, however, in the end they abandoned her.

Before they broke up, Yu-hsiu treated her ex-partner's family very well. However, after she was pressurised by him to have an abortion, she stopped helping his family and as a result, she started to receive some unpleasant comments from her ex-boyfriend's mother. Later on, when they were still together, his sister had convinced him to leave her, which was helped by her offering him a job so he could start a new life. After they broke up, the ex-partner's family avoided taking the responsibility of raising the child and asked Yu-hsiu sign an agreement not to contest any financial issues with them. However, when they found out the child was healthy and sound, they came back to claim guardianship of him and generated to several rows.

According to the interview, Yi-hsiu's opinion or voice was often ignored and she was severely mistreated. Also, it was later revealed in the interview that she had experienced domestic violence from her ex-boyfriend while they were still cohabiting. She would be

verbally or physically abused if she did not manage to do the housework very well. Moreover, given that she was a heavy smoker, the criticism was made that her body was not suitable for getting pregnant and that she would be incapable of being a good mother. As such, this is another example which raises the matter of what constitutes a good enough daughter-in-law as in Shu-fen's case, or 'you are not a good enough woman to have my son's child' as in Ching-ching's case (See Subsection 6.3.2.2). For Yi-hsiu, the question of what you should do to be a good mother was the reason why she was judged badly and eventually abandoned by her ex-partner's family. Other than the issues regarding roles, it should be noted that their actions regarding having a 'healthy son' after the ending of the relationship continued to be a threat, even physically, as they still tried to gain control of the child. As Yi-hsiu's mother told me while she accompanied her during the interview, the child's father would not have been so interested in getting his child, if it had been a girl. This seems to contrast with Lin (2009) claim, that there has been a rise in gender indifference towards new born children in Taiwan since 1990. For, according to Yi-hsiu's case, to some extent the preference for a son would appear to still exert its influence on the beliefs of the Taiwanese family.

What is of note is that, in comparison to the child's father's family, Yi-hsiu's own family members, although not so financially stable, played a very important role in supporting her during her decision-making process of giving birth to the child. She said to me:

If it was not for my mother, brother, my grandma telling me that, ' you could give birth to the child, we will take care of him for you', I didn't know what to do at all. Because of my mental condition I was totally lost.

(Yi-hsiu)

She described the worst situation was, '*she might not be here*', because she might have committed suicide when she could not deal with the stress from the child's father's family and the shame. Her family were also her main source of support after she decided to go out to work when her mother gave up her job and helped take care of her child. Moreover, when she was thinking about hiding herself from her distant relatives or friends⁵⁹, the

⁵⁹ It is also evident according to the changes on her ecomaps. Her stigma management strategies were amongst the most passive ones whereby her social network quite clearly shrank after she found out that she had got pregnant.

existence of her son and her mother also helped to be proud of herself as a mother. She encouraged herself by telling herself, ‘*if my mother could do it, I could do it.*’⁶⁰ Therefore, it would seem that the family is not always hostile to the mothers and but can even be the main supporter during difficult times.

7.2.3 Cases of mothers who adopted management strategies

- ***Case of Ren-fon: a capable mother who can confront shame (a confronter)***

Ren-fon, with a five-year-old daughter, was one of the mothers who did not apply for any welfare benefits in this research after becoming a never-married mother. As a highly educated woman (i.e. master degree and was studying for a PhD degree), she could afford her life given her freelance translation work. She also commented that she was a middle-class woman with sufficient ‘cultural capital’ during the interview. Moreover, as a blogger, she also focused on how to present her life as a never-married mother on the Internet. She had managed to publish several papers in childrearing related magazines covering issues of gender and single parents. In fact, she had been active in promoting a movement aimed at changing the structural circumstances of single parents in Taiwanese society. In her case, it can be seen that there were signs that she would not have to experience poverty (‘getting out’) and was confident enough to ‘get organised’ with other mothers to make a change to single mothers’ status in Taiwanese society.

Whilst her parents did not agree with her decision initially, after her mother passed away, her father, from time to time, helped with her material needs, such as housing or transportation costs⁶¹. However, she was still struggling with maintaining the relationship with her father as he could be very dominant and be judgemental about her circumstances.

⁶⁰ Her mother divorced when she was young and raised Yi-hsiu and her brother up on her own in a financially deficient way. According to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), the signs of individualisation can grow over time, whereby the daughter might learn from her mother who became divorced and separated from her husband that they should be economically-independent and thus, be more careful about deciding whether to enter into marriage or to have children.

⁶¹ There was a huge contrast in her two ecomaps in relation to how she interacted with her family before and after she found out that she had got pregnant. Before, she never asked support from her parents because of their hostile relationships. After she got pregnant, her father would provide some monetary support, while still maintaining a certain level of disagreement on her choice of becoming a never-married single mother.

In contrast to her tense relationship with her father, most of her close friends actually understood her reasons for choosing to be a single mother and this provided a very meaningful source of support for her. However, on occasion, she was still challenged by some of her friends on the Internet, who insisted that, *'there should be a father in the family.'* She told me that she was strong enough to answer this contention, but had chosen not to, as in her mind this was a very complicated issue, which was thus not easy to explain to a friend over the Internet.

Overall, she was amongst the most capable mothers in this research, in terms of pursuing life of individualisation. That is, she was one of the new generation have begun to live out their belief that they and no one else, should be the one to choose their life path. However, she still needed to deal with a few occasions when other people were malicious and would argue with her. Like Yu-mei mentioned in Subsection 6.2.3, Ren-fon experienced similar conflict with her ex-boyfriend and his new partner. She talked about that they had when the new girlfriend got very frustrated and called to have an argument with her.

She felt it was unfair. Yeah, she was going to ask the guy [the child's father] to come back to me. But she still felt it's unfair and began to tick me off. (...) I kept getting rebuking and threatening calls from them at that time.

(Ren-fon)

Unfortunately, she ended up having to take the girlfriend and her ex-boyfriend to court due to their malicious slander on the Internet. From her case, it seems that whilst she did not need to worry about the stigma of applying for welfare benefits, she still needed to carry the stigma produced by her social network, especially from her father and some individuals regarding whom it was really none of their business. Consequently, even though she was a mother with a higher level of individualisation (i.e. economically independent; low attachment to men and marriage; and confident enough to fight with people who did not accept her), the tradition retained its power and influence through the social network surrounding her and so she constantly had to develop strategies to confront with the challenges.

- ***Case of Yue-shia: a capable mother who was a temporary welfare dependent (a negotiator)***

Here, Yua-shia's case is taken as an example of the decision-making process regarding

childcare arrangements involving a series of considerations. Yue-shia, a 37-year-old mother with a three-year-old daughter, had to leave the child's father as he was having an affair, and could not afford their lives (see Subsection 6.3.2.1). In Subsection 6.2.1, it has also been discussed how her family was not supportive at all owing to their strict belief in gendered norms⁶².

In comparison to the mothers who had resources so they could be full-time mothers, or mothers who still stuck to job hunting, with a high motivation to stay in the labour market, Yue-shia is one of the mothers who had given up after trying. She also experienced the toughness in the labour market after trying several times to work as a clothes vendor, but as mentioned before, she eventually adopted another approach to solve her childcare problem, that of choosing to give up work entirely. Here, she explains the main reason why.

If she went to the nursery school, there'd be a lot of money spent! The standard price is around 15,000 dollars. And the cheapest one I overheard still needs seven to eight thousands. (...) I couldn't make much money now either. (If I sent the child to the nursery school,) I'll have to pay 10,000 more every month, and all the rent. It means what I have earned in one month will all be gone.

(Yue-shia)

As she had no major support from her family, the cost of childcare became a really big concern. According to DGBAS (2013a), the average cost for childcare when a child is under three years old is actually twice that for three to six-year-old children. Moreover, according to a study by Chen (2005), the cost of the childcare facilities in Taiwan has, by and large, involved the operation of privatisation and marketisation without strong control by the state. Hence, the facilities, especially the private ones, have become too expensive for mothers with low incomes to utilise them. This reflects on Yue-shia's situation, as she could only '*hang on in there*' until her daughter was old enough to receive affordable childcare services.

Apart from the external constraints, secondly, she raised another reason which was

⁶² When asking her what her mother means to her on the ecomap, she explained to me how bad their relationship was after she had told her that she had decided to separate from the child's father (see Subsection 6.2.1).

generated from her inner beliefs. Ironically, as a highly-educated mother (with a bachelor degree), she had another social burden of deciding what kind of work she could do. When some people suggested to her to do work such as selling street food, she gave a strong negative response, saying, *'No, because first, this is shameful (job), and second, this doesn't make enough money.'* So, for mothers like Yui-shia, it could be seen that sometimes it is not only about making money, but also the type of the job she could be involved with and maintain her self-esteem. A 'shameful' job to her would discourage her from entering the labour market.

Thirdly, she explained to me about her belief to be a full-time mother:

I feel that you have to take care of your child by yourself so that she [her daughter] will have emotional attachment with you. She will return this to you by filial piety. (...) This kind of relationship and caring with her should develop from when she is little

(Yue-shia)

Owing to her beliefs, whilst one friend offered to help her take care of her child so that she could go to work, she still felt she would rather stay at home taking care of her daughter. The two matters of childcare cost and her belief that a mother should be responsible for raising her child, combined with her need to protect her socioeconomic status, had pushed Yue-shia into taking the decision to become a full-time mother, and manage her financial situation with her modest savings and welfare benefits. Currently, she was in the status of 'getting by'. However, as Lister (2004) highlighted, if the structural factors, such as her education, exert the influence, she might have her chance to maintain a position in the labour market by working independently so as to be able to afford for her and her children a decent quality of life.

Regarding Yue-shia's perception of her social-relational challenges, it is also crucial to find out how she changed her understanding about her situation. She told me she found it difficult when her daughter was little and she took her out in the pram, for she thought they would ask embarrassing questions. However, after several years she realised it was important to adjust her state of mind. She felt, as a single mother:

I shouldn't feel bad whatever other people said, because, to be honest, what I've been

through people wouldn't know. They don't know and when I explained it to them they didn't understand, and they forget about it the other day when I see them, and they would ask me the same question over and over again. So I reckon our lives should be lived by ourselves and not be concern about other people's opinions.

(Yue-shia)

For Yue-shia, this reflectional thought actually came from the child's father when they were still taking care of their daughter together. It seems if there is someone in these mothers' network who could understand their stories, it would benefit them a lot in terms of encountering social stigma. It appears that there was also the stimulus for them to transform positively when an important other, such as with Yue-shia, and a school teacher in Shu-fen's case, encouraged them that they were not abnormal and there were so many people who were facing similar challenges to them.

- ***Case of Ching-hua: a welfare dependent who needs to manage poverty and shame (a survivor)***

Here, Ching-hua is presented as a case who was highly benefits-reliant, having deliberately chosen to 'live on the dole', and who was unrepentant about being in this situation. Ching-hua was a 38-year-old mother with two daughters who were aged 16 and 3 years. As a mother with only a junior high school certificate and debts issues, she had believed it would be extremely difficult to find a stable job when her daughter was very little. After she gave birth to the second daughter, she moved into the single-parent home run by the local government and began to receive support from the formal resources. However, because the housing support lasted only for two years so she had had to move out, but was still provided services by her social worker. Moreover, as she had a small daughter, she succeeded in applying for additional benefits from some other NGOs and was also in touch with the social workers there. In her situation, these resources were all supportive, whilst her family was not and she was comfortable in having to rely on them rather than her family⁶³. However, she also told me that she understood the necessity of seeking a job

⁶³ It could be seen that in her current ecomap, her social networks were mainly related to formal resources, in particular, that provided by the local- government-run single-parent home. It is interesting to see that even though she shared a house with her mother while being interviewed, she did not put her on the ecomap which showed the networks after she become a never-married mother, and complained about

because several of the helpers expect her to find one. What followed was that one of the NGOs had reduced the benefits given to her and her daughters. She spoke of how she felt anxious knowing her benefits from an NGO had been cut by 30 percent.

They cut it from 7,500 to 5,000 (NTD) as they assumed my eldest daughter could go out to work for herself. (...) In total, they [the benefits for her and her two children] are around 12,000, but it is not even the amount of the base wage! This is the thing about being given the money. When they cut the 2,500, I found the living conditions were getting so much worse.

(Ching-hua)

Regarding Ching-hua's case, it is inevitable that as they were highly dependent on welfare benefits and other subsistence payments for 'getting by' in life (Lister, 2004, p. 130), any reduction in assistance could seriously affect their quality of life. This echoes with Ridge and Millar (2011) reporting how when British lone mothers face unstable support from benefits, their level of financial insecurity increases, which can negatively affect their lives. Taking into account the findings in relation to other characteristics of the Taiwanese welfare system (i.e. temporary, small amounts, family-centred), the insecurity of depending on welfare for these mothers was acute, when trying to provide an adequate standard of living for themselves and their children.

As someone relatively-heavily dependent on welfare benefits, it would be expected Ching-hua would have to deal with the stigma of being in this position. However, it is noteworthy that she did not show any embarrassment about being reliant on benefits, for as she said she took them for her little daughter and it was not her fault that she had to have a child without a husband. Moreover, she had learned to not mind about the gossip from her neighbours talking about her daughters being fathered by different men by 'passing' or 'covering' (as discussed in Section 7.1.2.1), being well aware that there were many other mothers in a similar position to her 'out there'. However, she was rather mortified by the interaction with the person who was responsible for accepting their application. She pointed out that the NGO's workers were mainly housewives who gave their comments so

her mother's unhelpful behaviours when I asked the reason why one of the family was missing. In contrast, on the ecomap showing network information before she became a never-married mother, she clearly identified her mother was the person who had encouraged her to keep her two children.

directly that it was like ‘*knives cutting into skin*’ during the phone call she made asking for support after the child’s father had abandoned her. It seems that at the moment of having to ask for help, she had to speak quite bluntly about what her real circumstances were if she was to get support, which left her feeling very vulnerable. As she had to abandon the strategies such a covering, that usually kept her protected, thereby exposing her true identity. In other words, she could still manage her stigmatised experience as a welfare dependent until her weakest point of being ‘not married’ was disclosed.

The brief summaries of the above described cases are presented in Table 7.1⁶⁴.

⁶⁴ These six cases represent members of these three categories, where each of the focal mothers can mostly fit in one of them. The categories which each mother belongs to are also identified in Appendix 5.

Table 7.1 Summaries of certain cases

	Making the decision to become a mother	Managing the life after becoming a mother
High level	Ya-hsin <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● High s-e status ● Decided to leave the child's father of her own accord; open mind to new relationship, but it is satisfied just being with her son ● Strong social support with some rejection to start with ● Strong confidence for dealing with any hostility ● However, she engaged in 'Othering' other never-married single mothers so as to maintain a distance from them 	Ren-fon <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● High s-e status ● Decision to leave the child's father made by herself ● Strong social support except from her family ● Strong confidence for dealing with any hostility ● Too busy working for re-partnering
Middle level	Pei-Fang <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Was in the labour market and would remain so through the protection of institutional support (based on social capital) ● The child's father was having an affair with her ● Support from the family, especially childcare in the future ● Strong desire to be a mother ● Knew that she would be able to deal with it on her own ● Open to a new relationship, but the new man has to accept her son. For the moment, she was focusing on taking care of the child 	Yue-shia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Was in the labour market struggling to earn money, but quit because: 1) her child was too young and she was too tired to take care of her and work at the same time; 2) the earnings were not enough; and 3) a strong belief that 'you should be the one who takes care of your child' ● Negative response from the family; only limited support ● Had some savings and believed that she could work in the future ● Open to a new relationship, but with a strong requirement that her daughter should be accepted and loved as well.
Low level	Yi-hsiu <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quit her job since she was with the child's father ● Highly manipulated by the child's father's family throughout the whole childrearing process ● Family support in decision making, child care ● High welfare dependency ● Low initial self-esteem, but gradually regained her confidence as a mother ● Currently in a new relationship 	Ching-hua <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No formal job taken because she had an issue of debt ● Two relationships: one, a one night stand and the other resulted in marriage, but he then abandoned her leaving her with the two children ● Gradually lost her support from her family ● High welfare dependency ● Not with low self-esteem, because of her commitment to taking care of her little daughter, but still felt mortified initially owing to her unmarried situation

7.3 Summary of this chapter

This chapter has concentrated on the theme of management strategies and the difference between the focal mothers in terms of economic capacity, family ideologies and stigma management strategies. It can be seen that they, indeed, had to generate some strategies to deal with the financial and social-relational challenges. In terms of finance, if not independent in the labour market, some of them found they had to be careful about daily expenses and had to skip certain payments in order to pay for the crucial survival items, such as nappies or infant formula, when their children were still young. Some of them, on the other hand, the focus was on getting out the poverty by participating in the labour market enthusiastically and expecting their children to be 'successful' in the future, so that they would not experience what they had. However, it can be seen that structural factors, such as gender or class, are sometimes those underpinning the outcomes. Moreover, as a mother who often felt ashamed in front of their family or friends, it was hard for them to ask for help when revealing their identities at the same time. As a result, there were rarely active public actions aimed at changing their structural position, but rather, they utilised the Internet searching for information in relation to welfare benefits or other formal resources so as to protect themselves. In sum, according to Lister (2004), such mothers are more inclined to manage their financial situation individually.

In terms of managing stigma, apart from hiding themselves from the public, they would use several techniques, such as 'covering' or 'passing' in front of people, so that they did not have to reveal their identity before they were ready. These, in the opinion from Shih (2004), are pessimistic perspectives and could only provide them the draining process of how to 'manage a damaged self'. In contrast, some of the mothers' strategies emerged as being relatively active and agentic. They were clearly on the way to reflexivity and had developed confidence in front of people when discussion about their situations emerged. However, not many of the mothers in this research demonstrated this type of strategies.

In Section 7.1 and previously in Chapters 5 and 6, the varying influence of cultural and structural factors was clearly apparent. Following on from this observation, in Section 7.2, the differences between mothers were presented in three groups, as confronters, negotiators and survivors, distinguished by the level of individualisation. It is inevitable that, the level of individualisation is closely linked with the structural factors amongst these mothers with

regards to their capacity to be financially independent, reflexive and confident in their decision to become never-married mothers. Mothers with higher education and who could sustain a position in the labour market did not worry too much about their financial circumstances when deciding to be a mother out of wedlock. When encountering social challenges, they did not just sit and wait for comments. Instead, they deliberated upon the pros and cons and were ready to face the harsh questions from the people who did not understand their logic of their choices. However, it cannot be denied that even for some of the mothers turned out to be in a relatively disadvantaged structural position, they still exhibited some signs of individualisation occurring in their lives. Several of them truly believed they were capable even though they had not returned to the labour market, and the others, whilst not having enough resources, began to find a space in the society that actually meant they did not need to care so much about how other people saw them. Gradually, many had been able to integrate the traditional expectation of motherhood into their new biography and so, effectively confront their critics. By so doing, it could be argued that signs of individualisation were indeed emerging among these individuals when dealing with their everyday lives in its unique way. Perhaps, it is indeed happening in a 'unique' way, being distinctive from the Western pattern, given the traditional social norms and class differences that are still exerting their profound influence amongst these women in the Taiwanese context.

Chapter 8 Discussion and Policy Recommendations

In the preceding three empirical chapters, I set out to address the research questions in relation to the experiences of never-married single mothers in a society where marriage is a dominant form of relationship and to explore the nature of the support they can access when they have made their life changing decision to accept this role. By examining 30 Taiwanese never-married single mothers' decision-making process and exploring their everyday daily lives, this study has disclosed everyday situations these mothers encountered according to their own voices and experiences. It is evident that their decisions to become a never-married mother and/or a full-time parents were affected by contextual factors, including society's perspectives on the family and/or the culture in which they were situated. Within this context, they developed divergent strategies to utilise their resources for meeting the financial and socio-relational challenges facing them, so as to sustain a position in the labour market and/or to manage their social resources as best they could. Some of the strategies identified have demonstrated 'agentic actions', which implicitly were contributing to social change, but the degree of individualisation in the vast majority of these mothers' cases did not equate with the western understanding of this concept.

In this chapter, the aim is to draw on the key findings highlighted in each of the empirical chapters and synthesise them into a final discussion. Based on the theoretical framework in Chapter 3, the morality of their choices and their financial difficulties as women in the Taiwanese context are discussed. Furthermore, the lived experience of this group of mothers regarding stigma is incorporated in order to forge a clearer image of their lives. The identified categories are thus presented to show the extent to which these mothers managed their lives given the structural constraints. Subsequently, based on these findings, policy proposals are advanced.

8.1 Reflections on this study

In Chapter 1, two research questions were raised for this research. Firstly, what experiences are faced by never-married single mothers in a society where marriage is still the dominant form of relationship? Secondly, what state provision and other resources are

these mothers able to draw on for support? To address these questions, I identified three key objectives:

- to explore how and why they became mothers without getting married in the Taiwanese context;
- to understand the economic and socio-relational effects of being a mother without getting married for women/mothers;
- to explore how never-married single mothers manage their everyday lives, including their experiences of employment, housing and childcare, as well as their strategies for coping with their identities as being never-married single mothers.

In Chapter 2, the financial and social situation of Taiwanese single mothers was considered. Financially, they face great difficulties as women, being more likely to fall into poverty. This is because they are often considered as ‘secondary’ labour power and many have been unable to benefit from the current Taiwanese social security system. Moreover, culturally, they are considered as a group of women outside both of their natal and their husbands/partners’ families. They were found not to be as accepted as single fathers in their family house or when asking childcare support from their family. Policy wise, because the state follows the ideologies of East Asian welfare regimes, the family is expected to provide holistic care from the oldest to the youngest, the burden of which rests heavily on women. In this context, the needs of single mothers are often neglected as they are assumed to be protected by a male breadwinner (or the rice winner in the Taiwanese context) rather than the state. Accordingly, in Section 2.2, it was explained how the design of social policy is one that is heavily means tested and hence, there is a lack of support in relation to benefits, childcare and even housing. Single mothers are expected to be workers (economically independent) and mothers (culturally nurturing) at the same time, but they have difficulty balancing these two roles. The result has been a policy regime for Taiwanese single mothers mimicking the ‘poor workers’ or ‘ unsupported mothers who work’ model that Kilkey (2000) and Peng (1997) categorised in the context of Japan, and also ‘worker-mother-family-outsiders’, as coined by Lee (2001). In terms of never-married single mothers in Taiwan, it has been revealed that they are still the smallest group among all single mothers. Additionally, the phenomenon of cohabiting has remained relatively low, having not increased much over the last two decades and they are considered to be never-married mothers in a legal sense, if this is their status of cohabitation. Their

situations under the regimes of East Asian welfare state mean that their choices in relation to childbirth and childrearing are restricted by institutions and regulations. Moreover, they are more exposed to social pressure than other single mothers owing to their choice to become a never-married mother, because this violates certain existing social norms, in particular, ‘marriage then childbirth’. Hence, in Chapter 3, I chose to examine their lives with a theoretical framework combined with the notions of individualisation, gendered moral rationalities and stigma with perspectives of gender, Confucian traditions and class, in order to understand their life experiences and management strategies under the aforementioned economic and social constraints.

Regarding the data collection and investigation, my intention was to elicit the mothers’ own perspectives through their own voices in accordance with a feminist approach. Specifically, by using qualitative methods and in-depth interviews, 30 never-married single mothers’ lives could be presented from their own points of view, and their evidence could subsequently be used to help improve their situation in the future. So as to collect even richer data, during the in-depth interviews, I also adopted ecomapping to capture visually whether and if so, how the participants’ resources and personal networks had been changed after the event of becoming a single mother. Furthermore, thematic and framework analysis were utilised to process the data in order to show these mothers’ decision-making processes, current living conditions and coping strategies in chronological terms as well as according to their different demographic characteristics and living circumstances. It was also deemed essential that the interview and analysis of the data should be conducted under the principles of feminist research, whereby I respected that each mother’s voice must be treasured individually and that I should form no judgmental opinions regarding those being interviewed. The methodology is explained and justified in Chapter 4.

Drawing on the theoretical framework based on gender (constrained individualisation, gendered moral rationalities, and stigmatisation happening to women), and the analysed qualitative narratives obtained from the interviewees, the research objectives were achieved through the presentation of three empirical chapters (Chapters 5 to 7). In Chapter 5, I investigated their decision-making process in relation to becoming a mother (Objective 1) and discovered that almost invariably this was not in accordance with their wishes. Rather, this decision was made under the consideration of a series of external factors imposed by society and the dominant culture. The importance of being a mother and not

having an abortion, the need to have a responsible husband as well as having a supportive family or family-in-law emerged as the most decisive elements for a large number of them. Thus, it could be seen that they were actually ‘recycling’ past social expectations through a reflexive process, whilst introducing signs of individualisation, when deciding, for whatever reason, to put single motherhood into practice. What is of note is that the way they dealt with morality issues, such as being unmarried, accords with the ‘gendered moral rationalities’ perspective rather than aligning with mere economic incentives. That is, they almost invariably made the decision to be mothers outside of wedlock despite the negative financial circumstances they might face through a process of negotiation and/or reconciliation that resulted in them seeing this status as one that was acceptable to them. Of course, in some cases there was no such choice in that the women concerned were forced to accept non-married with child(ren) status. In sum, the evidence presented in this chapter provided insights into how the focal women challenged the boundaries of morality, to a greater or lesser extent, within the constraints of the Confucian context in which they were situated.

In Chapter 6, I went on to assess the challenges they have encountered since they became never-married single mothers (Objective 2). Financially, they were indeed more vulnerable in comparison to men and married women. Some were struggling to sustain themselves in the male oriented labour market and the gendered obstacles existing within it, with the added disadvantage of having to pay for child care on their own. Others had failed to maintain a position in the labour market and had to rely on welfare benefits, either because it was not sufficiently remunerative so as to be able to afford to bring up their child or because they had a desire to be a full time mother, a sentiment that is very strong in Taiwan. In respect of social relations, many experienced stigma not only from their family and/or their personal network, for this also extended to those with whom there was no previous relationship. Whilst on paper the state has been transformed to emphasise gender equality and has adopted various approaches to take care of the most disadvantaged, some of the focal mothers still felt marginalised by the state as the negative judgmental attitudes came harshly from the front line administrative staff who were supposed to help them, thus leaving many of them feeling stigmatised. Given these circumstances, only a few of them with a stronger attachment to the labour market and with sufficient support, appeared to be managing ‘well’ and these could be taken as examples of being highly-individualised. This is illustrated by the management strategies and three categories of mothers presented in

Chapters 7 (Objective 3), with each group of these mothers representing different levels of individualisation during the process of choosing to become a mother, and seeking to deal with their daily challenges. These three categories of mothers are also represented by six cases exemplifying those with varying levels of resources and capacities.

Having provided a recap of the preceding chapters, the next section contains further elaboration of the findings, in particular, by considering them in relation to the existing literature and theories.

8.2 Key themes from the study and a conceptual framework

Drawing on the three empirical chapters, three key themes have emerged regarding these mothers' lived experiences, which are discussed in this section. Each of these three key discussions, respectively, focuses on issues in relation to morality (decision-making process), gender (financial and social consequences) and individualisation (various management strategies). While these concepts are discussed in isolation, it should not be overlooked that the reality is that they are interwoven in the process regarding the mothers striving to live with the status of being never-married and single. Consequently, following the three discussions below, these aspects are synthesised into a theoretical framework that allows for examination of their various lived experiences as never-married single mothers in Taiwan. As a result, the three research objectives put forward in Chapter 1 can be met.

8.2.1 Decision-making: dealing with the morality issues of being a never-married single mother

Two decision-making junctures emerged from each of the empirical chapters that led the never-married mothers to question themselves, in relation to whether what they had opted to do was the right thing, given it challenged the dominant morality in Taiwanese society. The first was obviously when they decided to become a mother without getting married, and the second was when managing life after becoming an unwed mother, where the challenges included choosing whether to be a full-time mother or not and dealing with the social stigma. The former juncture can help to achieve one of the main objectives of this research: how and why these women become mothers out of wedlock.

The first of these decision-making scenarios involved a series of events, as identified by Rowlingson and McKay (1998): pre-marital sexual behaviour, no

contraception/contraception failure, becomes pregnant, continues with pregnancy, does not marry and keeps the child (See Figure 1.1); hence, becoming a never-married single mother. As discussed in Chapter 3, the notion of ‘gendered moral rationalities’ from Duncan and Edwards (1999) was employed to explain how these mothers made their decision at each point. It helps in the examination of the decisive push and pull factors of their decision-making process. They argued that single mothers’ decision-making is strongly influenced by their network, including their family and their neighbourhood. The wider social context, including the social policy and the structure of the labour market also exert an influence on their decision. In the context of Taiwan, as has clearly been explained, the Confucian values held by society form a powerful backdrop that never-married single mothers have to take account of. All of these external factors put pressure on these mothers in such a way that their life paths after making the choice to keep the child were usually not determined by them alone.

First of all, it is crucial to look at the point when they had their relationship with the child’s father to examine whether they had freedom to make their choices. In modern western societies, relationships can, as Giddens (1992) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) put it, be formed and break up solely according to a couple’s wishes, rather than be beholden to external influences. However, in Taiwan, whilst modern relationships have gradually become more democratic, with greater emphasis being placed on intimacy, it is still the case that their formation is almost invariably family-oriented and subject to certain types of gender roles, such as it being ideal for men and women to get married (Chuang, 2012; Tsai, 2007; Yang & Yen, 2011). Nearly all of the focal mothers⁶⁵ established a relationship which they thought would go on and have a perfect ending, including the ones who entered their relationships with the intention of seeking economic security. As discussed in Chapters 3, the free choice of having a relationship and engaging in pre-marital sexual behaviour are generally accepted by Taiwanese society nowadays. Therefore, being in a relationship and having pre-marital sex do not bring to serious problem. What violates the existing social norms and has generated widespread controversy amongst society at large as well as inner conflicts among these mothers in some cases, is when there is a child (or

⁶⁵ Except Mei-lan, who had her child as a result of her work as a prostitute and Ching-hua and whose first pregnancy was from a pen pal she met just for a short while.

several children) with a woman who is not married. This brings us to take a closer look of relational dynamic after these mothers found out they were pregnant.

As Beck-Gernsheim and Beck (1995) and Morgan (1996) have pointed out, the dissolution of a relationship often does not signal the end of it, especially when the couple has children, for in such circumstances the negotiation of childcare responsibility continues to be an issue in many cases. In the East Asian context, it is even more complicated when a relationship with children is falling apart, because the Confucian values, such as familism and the importance of marriage are deeply embedded. According to Gung (2008), childbirth and marriage are still inseparable for some of the women in the Taiwanese context and hence, it is not uncommon for a 'shotgun' marriage to place. Yang and Tsai (2009) also emphasised the importance of marriage so as to increase the fertility rate in this context. Whilst some cohabiting mothers in this research could accept deferring being married by cohabiting with the child's father due to the financial burden, some of them actually insisted that there should be a 'complete family' for the child, with two parents. Moreover, from a cultural perspective, a child denotes to a blood-related inheritance and a responsibility in a Chinese family, which also requires the child's mother to be given a formal position in the family (ibid), i.e. getting married to the child's father. These strong beliefs resulted in several of these mothers remaining hopeful of forging new relationships or having a reunion with the child's father. However, few of the stories of mothers in this study ended as Gung (2008) has suggested in her research. Instead, at the point of being interviewed, some were abandoned by the child's father and some were rejected by the child's father's family as their future daughter-in-law, as they were regarded as unfit to be a good mother. For mothers in these circumstances, they were unwillingly driven into unwed motherhood and many reported at interview that they did not choose to take up this role. Instead, they retained their belief in familial ideals and still expected to have a proper marriage and family at some time in the future.

Conversely, other mothers had proactively decided to separate from their partners as for them the relationship was not working. Unlike the mothers discussed before, they themselves considered their partner to be an unsuitable father and secondly, the family-in-law, for whatever reason, was seen as being unacceptable. In Chapter 5, it was highlighted how many of these mothers had certain standards in relation to whether their partners were fit to be their child's father. During the interviews, they often showed a

tendency to justify themselves in this way as they believed there should be certain responsibility that men should take, such as gender division of labour in accordance with what was expected in an East Asian household (Chan, 2008a; Herr, 2012; Xie, 1994). That is, the ability of these men to be a good partner or father was as important for these never-married mothers as being a good mother (as well as a good woman) in the Confucian context. Hence, some of the focal mothers justified leaving partners because of their failure to take up this role. This action also occurred when the mother's prospective family-in-law interfered too much in the business of raising the child or demanding the adoption of their surname for him/her. Some were therefore not prepared to take up the traditional role as a daughter-in-law, including some of the cohabiting mothers, as their new family was too overbearing such as in Hiao-bing's case in Subsection 5.3.1. From these two rationales, it would appear that, on the one hand, some of these mothers drew on the traditional values as the standards expected of men and family-in-laws, to justify leaving the relationship. On the other hand, there were those who were not ready to conform to Confucian values to be a 'good' and 'behaved' daughters-in-laws as expected, using this as their reason for breaking up with their partners or postponing their marriage and claiming that they had no choice. Through this, they could claim themselves to be the most responsible ones in comparison to their irresponsible partners and aggressive families-in-law, while they kept the child and strived to raise her/him. In this regard, there was a moral position for them while their choice of becoming a mother was made based on the traditional ideologies of family and marriage. This, I argue, could still be considered as a sign of their autonomy, which embodied itself in a modern form of relationship within a rapidly-changing context, which in some cases had been adopted so as to avoid the gendered and unequal situation that could well occur within a relationship.

Along with considering the pros and cons of whether to maintain the relationship, the mothers in this research, including those whose relationship with the child's father was never established, faced another question, that of whether to keep the child. According to Rowlingson and McKay (1998), the growth of single lone motherhood in UK, abortion or adoption are possible alternatives that are considered so as to avoid this situation (See Figure 1.1). It has been seen in this research that many of these mothers contemplated the choice of having an abortion initially. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Genetic Health Act (GHA) provides a technical way for mothers to have an abortion when they are going to be mentally or physically affected by the pregnancy. However, many researchers have argued

that this is a way to manipulate a women's body, whereby the state, the men and other family members in the family are all involved in controlling the childbirth for their own interests (Cheng, 2015; Ho, 2008; Kuo, 2009; Lin, 2008b). In the case of Hui-chiao, this demonstrated another example, in that it was considered morally-acceptable to abort an unexpected or unaffordable pregnancy in the Taiwanese context, with this being seen as a 'responsible' act in a society that honours marriage and the two-parent family (Hertog & Iwasawa, 2011). However, as cases of unwed mothers in Sri Lanka (Jordal et al., 2013) have shown, it can often be a moral struggle that they have to confront when deciding if they choose to have an abortion, for they know that if they do so, this will be at high cost to their internal feelings (Mei, 2010). Similarly in this study, many of the mothers saw having an abortion as giving up a life and hence, not taking responsibility. Some even explained how they would have to deal with the spirit of the dead child being around them in the future, the burden of which they would have had to deal with themselves (See Chapter 5). Moreover, as several of the mothers indeed had experiences of having had an abortion, this, together with the condemnation of having done so, had galvanised them into deciding to keep the newly-conceived child.

In addition to abovementioned factors, several other factors contributed to the decision to keep the child. As Cheng (2010) and Lit (2011) has argued, they would also take account of their own financial capabilities and whether their family or partners would support them in the future in a more active sense. Several had confidence in their own resources, even though they had not re-entered the labour market (for example, in Pei-fang's case) and several had received permission and support from the family so not having an abortion (for example, in Hsui-li's case). Several of the cohabiting mothers gave birth to the child when their relationship with the child's father remained stable. Pei-fang, however, was an example of someone whose desire to become a mother and have her own family was strong from the beginning to the end. Not only her, for some of the most disadvantaged mothers also decided to be a mother, notwithstanding their worries about their financial situation and their families' disapproval, showing they were a group who valued their identity of being a mother over their reputation or future career. Jarrett (1996) and Lit (2011) also registered this matter in their research on never-married mothers.

Also, age had become another incentive, whereby some attached their decision to have a child to their biological clock. Regarding which, childbirth or having a child are considered

an important achievement for Taiwanese women as it gives them a sense of meaning to their lives (Pan, 2005). According to Linn (1991) and Bock (2000), this was one of the most salient reason for adult never-married mothers justifying themselves for having a child, that is, they could exercise their agency so as to resist the dominant value of getting married before giving birth to the child. Linn (2002) went further to claim that these mothers' 'deliberate motherhood is one path for women in their striving to become moral subjects' (p.115), showing that the significance of a woman being a mother can possibly come to compete with the dominant cultural discourse of 'marriage then childbirth'. This tendency was also apparent among mothers when being asked to give their baby up for adoption. Cases such as Wei-chen and Ching-ching in Subsection 5.4.3, are examples of mothers who once having decided to give birth to their child, also decided to keep the child with them, despite pressure to give it up for adoption. Therefore, even though the policy provides alternatives, such as abortion or adoption, these mothers were those who processed the moral logic according to their propensity for certain beliefs and ideologies and chose to keep the child.

The discussion regarding childbirth so far has led to the identification of two groups of mothers with distinct patterns throughout the process of deciding to become a never-married mother. Those in one group thought about being a mother from the very beginning no matter what would happen. This included mothers who were cohabiting stably when they believe their partners would take the childcare and financial responsibility, and mothers whose relationship did not work out. Whilst those in the other group thought initially about having an abortion, because the child's father was unsuitable or the family-in-law did not accept him, but eventually were 'pushed' or pulled into becoming a mother after having considered their financial resources, the level of family support and their own beliefs on being a mother. Regarding the former group they exhibited signs of individualisation as they went through a reflexive process and then made a decision – to be a mother without marriage. This can be taken as a traditional gesture, but yet a very agentic action as this has shown great autonomy during the decision-making process of them becoming a never-married single mother. Regarding the latter ones, many appeared to have actively worked to ensure their own financial resources and family support would be enough so they could take on the responsibility of raising their children on their own. If not, the cultural discourse of infant spirit or social expectation of women being mothers, manifested themselves as passive factors, which forced them to enter the

motherhood. That is, they made their decision in a more constrained form, showing that external factors impacted strongly on this group of mothers. Moreover, from the insights obtained regarding these two groups, it cannot be denied that the mothers in this study were not like mothers in the Western context described by Hertz (2006), where the hope of having their own children from the beginning was strong, even when they were not involved in any relationship. Rather, the situation was hardly theirs to control for many of them. Hence, this first juncture to choose to be a single mother manifested itself as one piece of evidence that the process of individualisation can be seen as still being very constrained owing to the complexity of having children out of wedlock in the Taiwanese context.

Table 8.1 summarises the key points of the above discussion, which incorporates two kinds of decision-making process exercised by the focal mothers when they decide to keep the child while not getting married (i.e. separating with their partners or maintaining in a cohabiting relationship). At the beginning they desired the status of the relationship to remain and perhaps if getting pregnant, they could give birth to the child and the child's father could take care of the child together with them. However, one group of mothers, with fairly high level of freedom, have realised the initial desire was no longer suitable for them, and modified the desire to be a never-married single mother. For the other group, their decision-making process was full of limitations and constraints in terms of beliefs and resources, thereby the outcome of becoming a never-married single mothers is never what they expected. In the end, these two groups came out with the same outcome of becoming a never-married single mother, but with different pathways.

Table 8.1 The active and constrained decision-making process when deciding to remain in relationships and childbirth

	On relationship	On childbirth
I. The initial desire	Getting married or remaining in the relationship	Giving birth to the child or having abortion
II. Two types of decision-making process	<u>Active</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Considering child's father and family-in-laws as unfit 2. No intention of getting married 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wanting a child and a family for a long time (with reasons such as 'It was the childbearing age' and 'I felt the responsibility') 2. Cohabiting stably, believing the child's father would take responsibility
	<u>Constrained</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Being abandoned by the child's father; or the child's father were not capable 2. Being considered not fit as a good woman/wife/mother 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Concerning stigma on abortion, the child's life, infant spirits and chances to give birth to a child again 2. Was not happy about giving birth to a child. After considering financial ability and family's support, they changed their mind.
III. The outcome	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not getting married but staying in the relationship 2. Separating 	Giving birth to the child without getting married or staying in the relationship

Overall, I would argue in this research these mothers, indeed, embarked upon a journey of choices and morality by negotiating with the available resources and their beliefs so as to reach a 'relatively moral' position, where they could vindicate themselves when facing the pressure from the dominant cultural and institutional discourses. It is a significant finding that these women were a group of mothers who decided to keep the child for a variety of conscious reasons, either passive or active, which challenged the general consensus of 'giving up the child for the greater good, if conceived out of wedlock' or 'marriage then childbirth' (Lan, 2007; Wang, 2009). However, it can be seen that through 'gendered moral rationalities' the signs of individualisation that emerged, in most cases, remained very constrained among these focal mothers because of the moral complexity of having a child without getting married in the Taiwanese context.

8.2.2 The financial and social-relational challenges as a woman – and then a never-married mother

The second objective of this research was to understand the social-relational and economic impact of never-married single motherhood. It was highlighted specifically in Chapter 6 that these mothers, indeed, encountered challenges after they decided to become a mother. The consequences of being in financial hardship and social-relational crisis are vivid reminders of how the process of individualisation was limited in relation to many of these mothers' lives. According to Beck and Beck Gernsheim (2002), women's individualisation is 'incomplete' in comparison to men. Consequently, in this subsection the aim is to explore the consequences of never-married single motherhood through the lens of gender as can this further explain the difficult situations that many of the focal mothers were having to face.

In Chapter 3, it was discussed along with the signs of individualisation in a Confucian context, how women in Taiwan have been subjected to disadvantages in the labour market in terms of their occupation and salaries. Traditionally, married women have been heavily tasked with being a mother and being in charge of the household, with primary responsibility for childcare and housework (Pan, 2005; Wu, 2007b). Consequently, they are perceived as only having a secondary level involvement in any economic activities. According to Chen and Chung (2008), this is why Taiwanese women claim less pension than men later in their lives and the reason why they are more likely to experience poverty and the need to claim benefits. The story is similar among single-mother families. In Chapter 3, the discussion of the feminisation of poverty indicated that a single-mother household is more likely to fall into poverty than those with single-fathers in Taiwan (Chen, 2002a; Lin, 2007; Liu, 2012; Wang, 2005). This accords with Millar (1992) stressing that 'it is because lone mothers are women that they have a very high risk of poverty' (p.149). As was evidenced in Chapter 6, the financial situation was the most worrying aspect for many of the focal mothers when a child who would have total dependency on them was going to be born. Several of them were in part-time, low-paid, and sometimes sex-related jobs before finding out they were pregnant. After finding out, they would tend to quit their job so as to protect the health of their child. After a while, when they attempted to re-enter the labour market in order to afford their lives, some of them found they had become less employable, for they were considered as being unstable employees. In this regard, in

comparison with some of the mothers who were more able in sustaining a position in the labour market, mothers who were in blue-collar or part-time jobs were often at higher financial risk after their decision to keep the child. It would also seem that, according to several of the mothers' experience, they had difficulties finding affordable childcare resources. So, they had to take care of the child by themselves and this often resulting in them relying heavily on state benefits. In this regards, it has been shown how they indeed struggled financially after becoming an unwed mother due to their disadvantaged gender.

Apart from insecurity in the labour market, the insufficient, means-tested and family-centred welfare benefits in this East Asian welfare regime do not cover the basic necessities of life, especially for mothers. It has seen that many of mothers in this study would endeavour to enter the labour market when their children became older as the income they could earn was better than the benefits they were able to claim. As was discussed in Subsection 6.1.3, the amount of benefits for disadvantaged single parents was inadequate and depending on them for the long term was problematic. This is due to the fact that the family is expected to be the main source of support, with the state provision only being residual and meant to compensate for what the family cannot offer (Kuo & Wu, 2003; Pascall & Sung, 2007; Walker & Wong, 2005). It was evident that some of the mothers in the research experienced rejection when applying for allowances from the Public Assistance Act (PAA), as their family members, in particular their parents, were counted as the part of the source of their income. It turns out that the PAA does not acknowledge the shaming and the sanction of resources that these mothers might encounter when telling the truth to their natal family. Moreover, there is also the contention generally held by society that as a group mothers, they should take on the responsibility, both morally and financially, owing to their decision to become a mother out of wedlock. The stigma of claiming welfare benefits is always there and influential on people's identity and self-esteem (Chen, 2006; Walker et al., 2013). Whilst some of the focal mothers returned to stable employment soon after childbirth, for others, the situation swiftly became precarious when they really could not maintain their employment, for their children were all young and they had no support from their family. Often they were the ones who depended on the welfare benefits entirely and became the target of stigma. To some extent, this has also emerged as one of the moral difficulties facing women at the second juncture of their single motherhood, if the decision is made to become a full-time mother.

In terms of the socio-relational consequences, it has been found that each person in these mothers' social network could potentially become the 'normals'⁶⁶ who place stigma upon them. In Chapter 6, it emerged that some of the mothers in the study had relational pressure from nearly every aspect of their social networks, including the formal and informal ones. According to the categories highlighted by Herek (2009), these mothers definitely encountered experiences in relation to 'felt stigma', 'enacted stigma' and 'internalised stigma', while interacting with their network members. Most of the experience derived from them violating social norms in relation to women's sexuality and motherhood as well as sometimes for being in poverty. In the case of Hiao-li, she struggled to reveal the event in front of others as she knew that being pregnant outside of marriage represented 'wrong' doing for a 'good' woman. The stigma was later enacted through the judgements from her neighbours. Moreover, she also accepted that when her family refused to provide any economic support, as she felt she was the one who had done the wrong thing. From other focal mothers' experience, it is evidential that, these mothers indeed encountered 'enacted' stigma, 'felt' the stigma from others and the social norms and the stigma were 'internalised' in them, disciplining them about what they should and should not do as a women with a Confucian cultural background.

Above all, many of these mothers were concerned a lot about their relationship with their families. It was discussed in Chapter 2 how the social support from the family of a single mother is relatively harder to obtain when compared a single father, as culturally daughters will not live with their family as sons do after they are married (MoI, 2010; Pong & Wang, 2002). For never-married mothers, especially teenage mothers, their family would almost invariably be furious when they knew the fact of the pregnancy (Chang, 2007; Chen, 2011b). As Mollborn (2009) has highlighted, it is very likely that there will be a withholding of resources when an unwed teenage mother's family perceive that it is an violation of norms to become a mother out of wedlock. Similarly in this research, it can be seen that some of the mothers were rejected by their family when they asked for help (e.g. Hiao-li's family), or being told that they would not inherit any property from their original family (e.g. Yue-shia's mother). This happened invariably to mothers who were cohabiting

⁶⁶ According to Goffman (1963), 'normals' are those who do not 'depart negatively from the particular expectations at issues (regarding stigma) (p.15)'. That is, normals are those who impute discriminating responses to the stigmatised group and justify their own actions.

or separated from their partner, with their family believing that they should take responsibility for their own actions. These examples suggest that the socially-constructed gendered role is strictly positioned for women by other family members in the Taiwanese context, and if they fail to play it well, they will be very likely to be punished. Moreover, it can be seen from the research that some of the mothers refused to accept their family's support as they had not established good relationships in the past, such as in Yu-mei and Chia-chia's case (in Subsection 6.2.1), showing that family history could also have negative impact on the interaction between family members after these mothers were perceived as having something which was not honourable among the family.

In comparison to mothers who encounter the stigma, some of these mothers' networks responded amicably, and they tended to obtain stronger emotional support when they were making crucial decisions. These responses not only encouraged them in making up their minds to keep the child (such as Wei-chen's example in Section 6.4), but also involved offers of financial or physical support after the child was born (Gue-fen and Chiao-ting's examples in Section 6.4; and Ching-hua's case study in Subsection 7.1.3). Whilst some of the families did not feel entirely comfortable, some mothers were still offered housing to settle down after the bombshell of their pregnancy was dropped (Fang-ling's example in Subsection 7.2.1). These gestures are distinct from what might be normally assumed, i.e. all of the families of these never-married mothers would show rejection. Instead, it seems some of them treasured their daughters to such an extent that it outweighed the embarrassment and shame they felt. Some of them, even though they were initially reluctant, took care of them and provided further support so these mothers could move on with their lives. According to Hsieh et al. (2014) and Pong (2005), however, this might happen due to the care contract between generations, namely, the expectations from the elderly parents to be taken care of by the unwed divorced mothers, which manifests itself strongly in the Confucian context.

Apart from the stigma generated from the informal network, that of benefit claiming is another issue that challenges the relationship between these mothers and the state. As discussed previously in relation to the economic consequences, benefit claiming often led to shaming. It is not only the state and its staff who might shame the applicants in trying to restrict their eligibility, for the applicant might also have internalised the stigma, believing she should not apply for public resources. The most salient example of this was provided in

Subsection 7.2.4, where the administrative staff who were in charge of the benefits applications showed unfriendly attitudes towards certain mothers when they were supposed to be helpful during the process of applying for support. Not only was it possible for these gate keepers to influence significantly the result in accordance with the application of the family and welfare ideology they upheld (Cheng, 2000), they were also inclined directly to express their critical opinions regarding these mothers when they disclosed their real identities in attempt to their future economic security. This resulted in mothers in this research sometimes having to behave as society would expect them in order to obtain the necessary resources, in other words, as Lee (2001) pointed out, having to be both mother and worker. This is in line with literature with regards to the purpose of stigma and shame (Dovidio et al., 2000; Walker et al., 2013), whereby stigma is actually a tool for social control and it works well with the Taiwanese women in that that the state can place the responsibility on the individual or her family. Stigma has therefore served to satisfy the interest of the East Asian states in controlling society in such a way that the state is able to avoid appropriate welfare provision.

From a gender perspective, it has emerged that the never-married mothers in this research were a group of women who were constrained economically and socially in a traditional society where gender has its dominant impacts on them. As they were women, they encountered higher risk of poverty in comparison to men, due to the unequal situation in the labour market. Regardless of their preference, they were required to integrate the mother and worker identities (Duncan & Edwards, 1999; Lee, 2001) and had to face fact that although working they would remain poor (Kilkey, 2000). Moreover, when they became never-married mothers, the risk doubled as they were seen as those who had violated the social norms of a society and the values of the state's welfare system. However, it emerged that some of the mothers were quite competent when it came to managing their financial capacity and their identity as a single mother. The divergent images amongst these never-married mothers are addressed in the following subsection, after a discussion concerning the economic and stigma management strategies.

8.2.3 Management strategies and different groups of never-married single mothers

In order to understand the third objective of this research, several economic and stigma management strategies adopted by these focal mothers were explored in Section 7.1. From

the discussion it can also be seen that the difference between these focal mothers are salient, not only in terms of their decision-making process, but also their ways of management after becoming a single mother. Some of the strategies were engaged with by certain mothers, but not others. This led me to identifying three categories of identities for examining the third objective further. The following subsections discuss the management strategies that these mothers adopted and the distinguishing characteristics of these three groups of mothers.

8.2.3.1 Economic and stigma management strategies

In Chapter 7, the strategies that the focal never-married single mothers adopted to deal with their daily challenges were discussed. Drawing on the framework introduced by Lister (2004) and Goffman (1963), these strategies have been captured and analysed. It can be seen that, firstly, as a woman, it was already hard for them to manage economically as a single mother. As suggested, they would encounter employment and childcare challenges when they were searching for independent sources of income from the labour market. Moreover, very often they had to seek formal resources, such as state benefits or allowances from NGOs, if they were unemployed or their family or close friends were absent or reluctant to offer sufficient support. ‘Getting by’ was the main approach of their economic management strategies, whereby most of the focal mothers had to manage their daily economic life through ‘resources augmenting, expenditure minimisation and stress management’ (p.133) (Lister, 2004).

Secondly, the structural factors appear to have exerted their influence on the level to which they could really manage economically, or ‘get out’ of poverty. Through the grouping of the mothers in this study, it has been shown how those with greater capacities (i.e. highly educated and continuously employed) and resources (i.e. supportive social network) were more likely to maintain a decent quality of life with their children. However, it was rarely the case that a focal mother who depended on scarce benefits without family support could handle urgent financial situations, such as the illness of the child or a breakdown of their motorbike (such as in Fang-ling’s case). Moreover, even though some of them expected to find a partner in the future so that their life can be economically secure (such as in Yu-mei and Ching-chung’s cases), from the evidence shown, it could not be guaranteed that this partner would be a stable source of finance, in particular, in relation to those who had experienced second or third relationships and had children from them.

Finally, they tended to work at the level of everyday-strategic actions, as it was not easy for them to conduct a political/citizenship type of agentic behaviour in terms of ‘getting (back) at’ and ‘getting organised’ due to their stigmatised identities. Some of the cohabiting mothers, however, were an illustration of the agentic action of ‘getting (back) at’. They were able to obtain a certain level of financial and childcare support, but this did not result in them managing better than the rest of the focal mothers. On the contrary, they were in constant fear of losing the relationship and/or worrying about not earning enough to pay debts and bills. It is evidential to see they were conducting similar strategies (i.e. by using their non-married identity to apply formal resources) to manage their lives as the other never-married single mothers. In terms of the approach of ‘getting organised’, being a never-married single mother made it hard for them to reveal themselves in front of people and thus be able to change their structural position. For the cohabiting mothers, similarly, they could not admit that they were cohabiting as they wanted to be able to claim benefits to improve their deprived lives. It is evident that a mother’s social life can have quite a negative impact on the economic aspect of her life, if she is subjected to any type of stigma.

With regards to the strategies on stigma, two types were generally adopted amongst the mothers in this study. The first refers to how when some of these mothers in the research were trying to avoid the scenarios that might potentially generate stigma by hiding their identities away from others, or not talking about their real situation (i.e. ‘passing’, ‘hiding’ and ‘covering’, according to Goffman (1963)). It has been contended by researchers that these strategies are adopted to protect the stigmatised person’s spoiled identity from being further harmed (Cockrill & Nack, 2013; M. Shih, 2004), and very often can only be conducted at the individual level (Jarrett, 1996). This resulted in them cutting down their network of friends, having no in-depth connection with their current colleagues and avoiding showing up in their neighbourhoods with their children. From a long-term perspective, several of the focal mothers had begun to feel relieved, as they realise that the stigma coming from others was actually not as strong as expected (See Yue-shia’s case). However, most of them would continue adopt the above strategies as they did believe that society as a whole would ever fully accept them. This is in line with what Jordal et al. (2013) and have reported, whereby never-married mothers can adopt passive tactics to ‘navigate’ themselves through never-married motherhood status without entirely resolving it. Moreover, as Cockrill and Nack (2013) have argued, these passive strategies would hinder

the focal subjects' potential to diminish the general stigma of never-married motherhood collectively, as they were still having to deal with it on their own.

In comparison to these mothers, others adopted different approaches that were more proactive and collective, bringing different insights into their lives that helped them to see that they were not abnormal. In some of the mothers' cases, they would share their experiences on the Internet and obtain emotional support and often extra information, which resonates with the collective actions that Scaraboto and Fischer (2010) identified amongst people with obesity. This sense of collaboration was also demonstrated when some mothers expressed the view that there were actually lots of mothers like them 'out there' and they were not alone (case of Pei-fang in Chapter 7). However, it has not been found in this research that these online activities were used to try to make any change in social opinions as some researchers have suggested. In this regard, it could be that due to the massive social pressure and the existing social norms regarding women, these mothers might only find it comfortable to 'get together' anonymously and would not be comfortable to 'get organised' publicly. However, there were some cases where a mother was willing to confront the circumstances that led to stigma and this was very much related to their confidence in their choice to become a never-married single mother, such as in Ya-hsin's case. This is similar to what Bock (2000) claiming that single mothers 'by choice', in particular those with independent economic capacities, are more likely to justify themselves in terms of their age, responsibility, emotional maturity and/or fiscal capability so that they can join in the mainstream. It is therefore of note that structural factors might also have an impact on how these mothers manage their social images. In the next section, discussion in the different types of never-married single mothers provide a clearer picture of how structural factors might affect the level of individualisation amongst these mothers through the examining their processes of decision-making and management.

8.2.3.2 Different groups of mothers and the level of individualisation

Section 7.2 summarised the different levels of individualisation according to three types of never-married single mothers. Through the case studies, it can be further seen that when they perceived their own capabilities were enough to afford a life for two or more; their family was supportive in both financial and physical terms; and/or their confidence to be a mother was strong then the level of individualisation was likely to be higher. If any of

these factors were not there, they might not become a mother out of wed lock, or, they might find it difficult to manage their lives.

From the mentioned characteristics, the differences between these focal mothers are salient in three ways: firstly, the confronters were relatively active in deciding what their lives should be and were keen to change how other people perceived them. These had shown a proactive approach to their situation when they decided to separate from the child's father; when they secured their jobs in the labour market and when they conducted the self-justifying strategies to diminish stigma they might perceive in their daily lives. They expected their relationship with the child's father to work to match what Giddens calls 'confluent love' which refers a democratic and non-oppressive arrangement and when this not forthcoming they decided to leave and raise the child on their own untroubled by what other people would think. The presence of these elements demonstrates that for these mothers a greater sign of individualisation had occurred than for the others. This is because they are the ones who had a higher education, had stronger capacity in the labour market and had more power within a relationship than the other mothers. However, it should be noted that in Taiwanese society these women were unlikely to be fully individualised. That is, even if they were financially independent and strong in managing what society thought about them, they were still subject to social pressure from time to time, such as in Ren-fon's case where her friends on the Internet might challenge her about her situation. However, in comparison to other mothers, they were still those who could navigate for themselves in the flow of individualisation and possibly in the future will contribute to transforming the negative public image regarding never-married motherhood into a positive one in Taiwan.

Secondly, it can be seen that many of negotiators did not wish for the break-up of their relationship. The traditional Confucian norms remained as the principal rules under which they made their decisions. For them, infidelity and/or the irresponsibility of their male partners in relation to sharing the childcare burden, were sufficient reasons to give up on the relationship. However, some of these women who were unable to get married opted for cohabiting with the child's father in preference to bringing the child(ren) up on their own. The aspiration to be a 'good' mother encouraged them to keep the child, be a full-time carer and to even refuse to embark on a potential new relationship, if the child was not going to be accepted. As these high moral standards had always been in their minds, it was

difficult for to consider their decision to become a mother as being emancipatory and moral-free. Despite this, Klett-Davies (2012) would most likely contend that this still belongs to being part of individualisation as it involved a choice pondered upon with a reflexive intention. Smart and Shipman (2004) have also argued that the process of individualisation is not totally without morality and commitment. In the East Asian context, several researchers have also discovered that the traditions are being reworked and implemented in a novel way (Chang & Song, 2010; Jackson et al., 2013). The negotiators in this study showed a tendency to stick to the principle of having a two-parent family as their highest expectation, which suggest they viewed single motherhood as just a temporary status.

Thirdly, the survivors possessed the characteristics of being constantly deprived of financial and social resources. Most of them had experienced oppression from their partners and prospective parents-in-law and this had negatively impacted on their self-esteem and their tactics for managing stigma, whereby they needed to avoid revealing their identity as a never-married mother and hence, struggled to hide it. In comparison with the confronters and negotiators, the survivors frequently sought resources from the formal sector, and sometimes had to tolerate explicit discrimination and restrictions being imposed on their lifestyle. Also, they and their own family were finding it hard to reverse the social norms by providing discourses that could help with transforming their position in their society. More often than not, it can be seen that they were trapped in a certain status, which involved bearing the transgression of not being a good woman/mother. For many of the survivors, their hope rested with their children, whereby it was through them that they searched for meaning in their lives.

Through these distinguished patterns of them developing their own biographies, the identity of the mothers in this study formed a spectrum, with individualisation being at one end and being stigmatised at the other. The mothers at the highest level of individualisation were mostly imbued with new ideals of how relationship should be established and maintained. They refused to be members of traditional society through getting married and reckoned their 'choice' to be mothers out of wedlock was acceptable. In comparison to these mothers, the rest (i.e. negotiators and survivors) submitted to the traditions and deemed that being married and being a mother would be their preferred 'choice'. It is evident that the negotiators could transform themselves into having a better situation by

pursuing standard gendered role expectations and having a strong sense of being a mother. However, this was not the case with the survivors, who often struggled with being stigmatised and having little strength or resources to reverse the situation. It is of note that, moreover, these groups of never-married mothers could share similarities, such as adopting the same strategies at some point of their life. That is, in accordance with what Klett-Davies (2012) noted, some of them had characteristics from two categories and consequently, under this author's categorisation could be considered as being 'Borderliners'. On the other hand, if the strategies adopted by these three types of mothers are examined through what Lister (2012) has defined the four quadrants of agency exerted by the poor, it would appear that they had failed to produce any strong collective action at this point. Consequently, the researcher would argue, the 'never-married single motherhood' is as yet not a 'suitable' identity for undertaking collective and political action. Rather, it is more likely to be dealt with through these three identities, because it is still considered a personal failure to be such a mother in the East Asian context due to the shame attached to it.

8.2.4 Summaries of the key themes and a conceptual framework for the research questions

From the discussions above, a conceptual framework can be generated when combining the ideas from individualisation, gendered moral rationalities and stigma, in order to address two of the research questions. For the first research question (**What experiences are faced by never-married single mothers in a society where marriages is still the dominant form of relationship?**), it appears that when looking at a group of women who violate certain social norms in a rapidly-changing society, it cannot be neglected that there are various factors affecting their decision-making process, the consequences of their choices and the management strategies they adopt. Whilst there were signs of individualisation emerging amongst these mothers, it cannot be claimed that any were fully individualised in the sense defined by Western researchers. This is because they were restricted to varying degrees by structural factors, such as gender, traditions and class. In particular, the vast majority felt they should actively engage with the ethical teaching and beliefs regarding how to be a good woman and mother. That is, it became clear that these mothers were experiencing not only a 'constrained individualisation', but also a 'moral individualisation', which would appear to have been driven by the Taiwanese context, such

that they were morally constrained, meanwhile being sufficiently empowered to make autonomic or even proactive choices about their lives.

Regarding the second research question (**What state provision and other resources are never-married single mothers able to draw upon for support?**), it has been shown in these mothers' narratives generated from their ecomaps that their social networks varied, whereby they might experience support or rejection (emotionally, physically or financially) depending on the beliefs and values the members of these networks possessed. This is not just reflected in the informal networks amongst their family, friends, colleagues and neighbours, for it also the professionals they had met when they asked for formal support. Based on the resources these mothers obtained as well as the capabilities and beliefs they possessed, they developed diverse identities to manage the event of becoming a never-married single mother at this point of their lives. This brings us to the next section, in which there is deliberation regarding the existing provisions from social policies; consideration of how the ideologies underpinning these can be altered; and practical solutions that could help improve these mothers' circumstances.

8.3 Policy and practice implications

In light of the findings discussed above, several policy and practice implications arise, in particular in relation to the financial and social-relational challenges that never-married single mothers face, which are addressed in this section.

8.3.1 The discourse of single motherhood: a social problem to a social change

According to Duncan and Edwards (1999) perspective, it would seem that single mothers in Taiwan can be taken as being part of a social change, if just the signs of rising the divorce rate and numbers of single parent family are considered. However, according to the categories identified by Kilkey (2000) in Subsection 2.2.4, even though policies for supporting Taiwanese single parents are employment-oriented in that are encouraged to enter the labour market to earn sufficient income, the poverty rate is still high among these mothers. This resonates with Peng (1997) reporting how Japanese single mothers are categorised – they are workers without support. Moreover, the findings in Chapter 6 in relation to their constraints when trying to enter labour market while their children are still small, are more inclined to be considered as being a social problem rather than

representing social change. That is, on the one hand, they are more likely to be forced to work as the benefits eligible for them are minimal and will not be enough for them, if they want to be full-time mothers and on the other, the gendered structure of the labour market is unable to offer many of them an affordable life style.

From the above described orientation of policy, it is thus crucial to ask: is there a chance of changing this situation? Is it possible to make these mothers financially independent? If so, then a complete structural change needs to be operationalised not just in the labour market, but also in the private sphere, including the family domain. The discrimination, segregation and gender gap in the labour market should be narrowed; and the single-parent family should be considered as the other type of family under the impact of social change. The closest opportunity for the abovementioned gendered structural change came from the crisis of the population decline predicted for future decades. The measures of supporting employed women in the labour market, in particular, the launch of paid parental leave and the increase of affordable childcare facilities, finally took place in the last decade in the name of gender equality (see Chapter 2). This has obviously been beneficial for the women who are working and have a sufficient sustainable income to be able to afford childcare. However, as has been seen in this study, the mothers who have benefited from this institutional change are those with a stronger labour market attachment who were better at sustaining their position in the labour market. Mothers who struggled to enter the labour market tended to rely on a constrained amount of benefits for their living. It thus can be said that while the recent change in policy could motivate the individualisation of women with higher capabilities, it was insufficient to improve the lot of those who were disadvantaged and insecure in the labour market. Consequently, a close examination of the existing gender equality policies is, indeed, required so the most disadvantaged mothers from the case study are able to improve their living situations through state support.

Another issue for the mothers in this research arose from their experiences of being stigmatised as a mother who did not get married as this put up barriers to the possibility of their being representative of acceptable social change. The policies designed for Taiwanese single parents are generally means-tested and family-centred. Consequently, support is only focused on mothers with an income below a certain living standard and those without any existing family. However, when examining the mothers' family support in this study, I found that it was not necessarily the case that mothers would be supported by their family.

Unfortunately, it emerged that several of the most disadvantaged mothers were challenged when engaging with the process of benefits application, being told that their family should be considered as part of their resources. However, whilst the family was expected to take responsibility of sharing the risk, they failed to do so due to the fact that they considered unwed motherhood to be shameful and wrong. It also invariably was the case amongst the cohabiting mothers that their family would not provide for them as they were expected to depend on their own partners, which meant of them experienced a certain level of economic hardship. Indirectly, these mothers might also be considered as doing the wrong thing when the state did not offer a hand. It is, therefore, recommended here that the eligibility for benefits for single parents should be reconsidered regarding its family-centred principle. The AFH should raise the amount awarded or social assistance should lower the threshold for eligibility and the assumption that the family must help should be dropped from the conditions for receiving support. In terms of mothers with a partner, but were still considered never-married in both the household registration and welfare benefit system, there should be established forms of laws regarding civil partnerships in relation to the partner's responsibilities in sharing financial support and the childcare burden. If this were also considered under the PAA frame, this would go further towards lowering the risk of relationship failure in some cases, particularly when the male partner is unable to provide sufficient financial support.

Finally, it has often been argued by those who support economic rationalities, that if the welfare assistance was increased it would become an incentive for mothers to depend on it entirely by deciding to give birth to a child out of wedlock. However, it is evidential from this study that the reasons why the focal mothers chose to become a mother were rarely associated with whether they knew there would be resources for them. Rather, the reasons for keeping the child, such as killing a life, age, responsibility and values regarding the status of motherhood, outweighed their own financial capacity for many of these mothers. Moreover, as most of the mothers in this study said that they would have preferred to marry or cohabit with the child's father rather than breaking up. It seems moral choices were a high priority in most of these mothers' minds and hence, it is contended that the rationale behind the policy design concerning issues of these mothers should be altered from an economic rationale to moral one. According to several mothers' suggestions regarding the current policies which are focused on boosting childbirth rate, they would expect the state to be more supportive in terms of housing, living expenditure and childcare

allowances, so that Taiwanese women are more willing to give birth. It would thus appear that if they were assisted in aspects of lives which they struggled with a lot, they could manage the risks of becoming a never-married mother better when becoming one was actually never their intention. This approach, according to Wang et al. (2013), could not only help with the financial situation of single mothers, for it could also be applied to mothers in two-parent families, thereby by giving them greater incentives to have a child. However, it should also be the case that all never-married single mothers have equal access to resources as married mothers, which was pointed out as not being the case in Chapter 1, such that segregated eligibility for allowances is eliminated.

Overall, three sub-discourses need to be addressed, if social change is to become the policy orientation: current gender equality policy is still not inclusive for the least advantaged; there remains the assumption that there will be support from the family; and the economic claim that benefits will act as incentives needs to be challenged. Together, these perspectives have helped to slow down the pace for women in Taiwan becoming individualised and hence, the discourse of single motherhood remains one that considers it as being a social problem

8.3.2 Tackling the ideology of gendered traditions: from a ‘deviant’ motherhood to a normal every-day motherhood

The stigmatised experience of these mothers urges us to re-examine the traditional gendered ideology existing in the Taiwanese context. It could be discerned in this study that some of the mothers encountered challenges which questioned whether they were a good woman/mother/wife, while they themselves made the decision to become mothers based on their beliefs and desire to become a good mother. It should be noted, that it can be seen that these focal mothers also used similar values to judge whether the child’s father was also fitting in the good father/husband categories, and some of them decided to separate from the child’s father when they were not suitable. As Peng (1997) has already pointed out, ‘too much emphasis on the male-breadwinner model could actually legitimate the formation of lone-mother families’ (p. 140), too much expectation could be being placed on men to carry the burden of the whole family. I, thus, agree with Sheu (2000) that policies in Taiwan should cast aside the traditional patriarchal ideologies and seek to assist

women and men individually as they are both part of the movement towards greater social and sexual freedom that is resulting in growing social structural change.

Also, it can be seen from the social network data supported by ecomapping that external factors such as family, friends, and neighbours were part of the impetus of how the mothers in this study made their decisions. There is, thus, a moral perspective, or even a perspective of ‘shared responsibility’, that needs to be reconsidered in any policy design endeavour as these women chose to be mothers in accordance with the beliefs which they were taught by the society they lived in and they were not deliberately setting out to become mothers on their own. At the practical level, it is important that staff and professionals in charge of the formal resources for these mothers should be more alert to their initial intentions and offer adequate and timely support to help women in enhancing their strong values in relation to motherhood, instead of being judgemental and at times harsh towards these mothers. Cockrill and Nack (2013) argue that long-term strategies should be in place to promote a different set of virtues, such as empathy and understanding, which are less gender-oriented and have the potential to change the gendered structure.

From the perspective of Confucian family ideology, it can be seen in this study how powerful the family can be in terms of performing actions such as fighting for an inheritor (in particular a male). It was identified in this research that most of the children’s fathers and their families would prefer that they be named after them (i.e. the child should inherit the surname) so the family’s bloodline is assured. It is, indeed, a dilemma for public policy to intervene, because this matter strongly considered as a private negotiation. With regards to negotiation, the focal mothers were often in an inferior position, whereby they would have to give up the child as being ‘theirs’ in order to receive support from the father or his family (i.e. their children could not have their family’s surname). It is therefore worthwhile revisiting the Family Part of Civil Code regarding the process of acknowledgement from the father’s side (Article 1063-1070) together with the traditional expectation of naming the child after the father (Article 1059-1). Perhaps the child maintenance system and Child Maintenance Options in the UK can act as a point of a reference, in order to bring in the support from the child’s father in a more formal and compulsory manner.

It could also be seen in the research findings that mothers in the confronter group were more capable of dealing with the situation when people questioned them about their

decision to become a mother when compared to the negotiators and the survivors. This is due to their high levels of social capital and their capacity to afford their own lifestyles without men. The process of individualisation was, indeed, more saliently happening among these mothers than others in that they were more likely to confront the existing norms with their agentic actions. Consequently, they were making a contribution to changing how society might treat these never-married mothers for the better. For extreme cases they might 'Other' themselves from the other mothers who did not equip themselves with sufficient resources and gave birth to their children 'casually'. This diversity among the mothers means that it is important to distinguish the services provided for them. For mothers with greater capability and confidence, sufficient childcare and more coherent regulations in the labour market would be helpful. However, for those with the relatively disadvantaged status, they should be provided consulting resources for discussing certain distressing experiences and should receive financial support to help them get through the most difficult times.

Whilst these mothers were amongst those that had decided to keep the child after finding out they were pregnant, it should not be overlooked that other women who decided to have an abortion or gave their children away for adoption were also exemplified as an alternative path for them to walk along. The stigma of giving up or giving away the child also impacted on these mothers leading to them making up their minds to opt for motherhood. This should be rethought through a more feminist discourse, such that the level of being stigmatised when choosing to have an abortion is decreased. The moral discourse of 'giving up a child' should be also discussed, together with the social expectation of womanhood/motherhood in order to reduce the stigma that women who have had an abortion or have given their child away. The current discourse of promiscuity or ignorance surrounding the abortion issue needs to be refocused to the notion of women deciding on whether to have one or not being about taking responsibility. I urge that in the field of professional practice there should be sufficient consulting resources to help these women to make choices without stigma being conveyed on them or them being judged. Moreover, in the field of policy-making, there should be a removal of the obstacles to getting an abortion, such as the father having to give permission. In their place there needs to be respectful attitudes towards women contemplating an abortion and should be encouraged to exercise their own autonomy by weighing up the pros and cons. As suggested by Cheng (2012), the approach to lowering the abortion rate should not place the

focus on stigmatising mothers. Instead, access to contraception and a friendly, affordable environment for childcare, are the ideal strategies to achieve the target.

8.3.3 Enhance the strength of informal and formal network and resources

From the findings discussed in the empirical chapters, it is crucial to emphasise the advantages that a strong social network can provide a mother when they are facing the point of decision-making or during times of financial deprivation and emotional distress. According to Canton (2015), the existence of social networks assisted lone mothers to manage their lives in the UK context of austerity and increased their resilience in times of adversities. However, it was also noticed by Canton (ibid) that the policy has never invested in facilitating social networks among lone parents. This is also evident in Taiwan, where there is a similar absence of policy for supporting mothers. That is, the state expects most problems should be dealt with within a family unit or by the individual, rather than develop programmes of support at a macro level. Therefore, it is proposed here that, firstly, policy makers should seek to improve the relationships between the mothers and their family and/or their neighbourhoods. However, this inevitably requires long-term strategies to demolish the gendered ideology and promote the value of mutual support within the family as well as the value of a female inheritor. From the perspective of being a daughter, it was clearly less stressful for those mothers who were able to be financially independent of their family. For when this was the case, they were considered a problem by the family and any support provided had no strings attached. It is thus argued that sufficient levels of financial support, either from state subsidies or secure employment, would not only make life easier for these mothers, for it would provide them with the opportunity to decide on what sort of relationship they wanted to maintain with their family. In sum, providing these women with sufficient financial and employment assistance support by the state will allow never-married single mothers to negotiate their social relations both inside and outside the family on an equal footing.

Secondly, it also evidential that social capital is important in relation to job hunting and sustaining employment in the labour market. Regarding the first issue, it emerged in several mothers' examples that they found their current jobs through their ex-colleagues or their relatives (see Pei-Fang's case in Chapter 7). According to Yan and Sorenson (2004), the relational aspect is highly valued in the Chinese job market. Consequently, public

policy makers should facilitate this type of social capital by establishing avenues for employed and unemployed single mothers to share experiences, thereby increasing the chances of the latter entering the labour market. It is also contended here that not only in private life should gendered ideology be challenged, for it should also be removed in the sphere of labour market so that female workers can be more secure in their jobs and free from discrimination. It was discussed in Chapter 6 that these mothers were worried about their marital status and concerned that because of their children they could lose their jobs. As a result, they often hid their parental status from their employers and gave up the rights they were supposed to have in the workplace (Subsection 6.1.2). I would, thus, like to call for more vigilance in the implementation of regulations, such as the Gender Equality in Employment Law (GEEL) regarding gender equality in relation to recruitment (Article 7 to 11). Through enhancing the measures and imposing fines on the employers, these mothers might have a greater opportunity to sustain themselves in the labour market and thus, experience financially secure lives.

Thirdly, according to the findings the emotional support from any part of the social network had a positive impact on helping these mothers to live their lives with their children. The sources of this varied from their existing family or friendship network to virtual networks on the Internet. It is possible that safe and friendly spaces could be created physically and virtually for these mothers to connect with others with similar challenging/unhappy experiences, so they can share their feelings and pool their resources so as to benefit each other. As mentioned in Chapter 4, local women's welfare service centres (WWSCs) are already equipped with critical services and spaces. However, evidence has shown that more often than not these mothers had to seek resources on the Internet (see Subsection 7.1.2.2) and felt more comfortable to share their experience on some online forums. Therefore, it is proposed WWSCs should develop connections, not only with the local neighbourhood, but also with these online forums so that mothers in need could approach the resources they provide more easily.

Finally, professionals, such as social workers and staff in the frontline working with these mothers, were often highlighted in these mothers' social networks. This more formal network was thus playing a quite essential part in mother's lives as they offered not only material support but also emotional support, in particular to mothers who relied on benefits heavily or mothers who had been expelled from their families. Several of the mothers

spoke of the importance of an active attitude from these formal resources as they badly needed information regarding benefits, outdoor activities for children, and chances to connect with other mothers; even just a simple and warm call from a social worker was helpful. After emphasising the importance of the formal resources to her, Wei-chen also suggested that *‘what a social worker can do is quite limited, so there should be more social workers actively walking out to care about us’*, thus showing the number of the professionals is essential to these mothers but still in short supply.

8.4 Summary of this chapter

This chapter has covered the main issues that arose from interviewing 30 Taiwanese never-married single mothers. Their decision-making process to become never-married mothers involved both inner and external forces which led them to their current positions. Whilst there were signs of individualisation happening at each step of decision-making, it can be seen that in most cases this was quite constrained, being subjugated to the social norms with regards to relationship and family. Likewise, there were consequences followed the ‘choice’ of becoming an unwed mother, which deepened the gap between an ‘agentic choice’ and a ‘choice without choice’. In essence, the power of traditions and the existing structural factors still prevail amongst these Taiwanese women, providing them with limited strategies for managing economically and socially. Consequently, it can be concluded that the pattern of individualisation is indeed different in the Taiwanese context and that the gendered moral rationalities should also be taken into account so that the reasons behind never-married single mothers’ decisions and their consequences can be clearly understood.

Based on these findings, the suggestion is that policies focused on changing the existing discourse of ‘single mothers as a social problem’ and instead, seeing them as the part of the social change, which might lead to them being offered more economic support from the state. Moreover, the traditional gendered ideologies should be challenged, so that these women suffer less in terms of the shame and stigma. In doing so, they would enjoy more in terms of freedom of choices and hence, become more confident regarding their situations than many are at present. Finally, the importance of having a supportive social network is apparent from the findings one that does not insist on following the social norms, for this can have a huge impact on these mothers’ choices and also could help to provide them with

the resources for supporting them in the future. It is thus recommended that the state should help to facilitate the focal mothers' informal networks through ways such as financial supplement, social capital building-up or developing new social virtues for this rapidly-changing society. By enhancing the impact of the policies in the institutional, cultural and practical level, it is hoped that these mothers' life experiences can be improved.

In the next chapter, the contributions of this research are presented, research limitations are addressed and recommendations for future research avenues are put forward.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

I started this research with curiosity regarding Taiwanese never-married single mothers' decisions to become unwed mothers in a society where marriage is the dominant form of relationship. I was also interested in what they experienced after they became an unwed mother and how they managed their lives when they encountered any difficulties. Through the narratives of 30 never-married mothers, this research provided not only the empirical evidence to address my questions, but also offered a methodological path to understand the issues concerning their experience. Moreover, it should be acknowledged that the theoretical framework underpinning this research being adopted and applied in an East Asian context has been a novel undertaking that has thus produced new knowledge. The findings offer insights into how future policy design can be improved.

After coverage of the key findings and the putting forward of policy recommendations of this study in the discussion chapter, in this final chapter the original contributions of this research are presented, limitations of the research are considered and suggestions for future research proposed.

9.1 Contributions of this research

The contributions of this research are four fold. First of all, it sheds light on how the western theories can be adopted in an East Asian context. Secondly, it has provided new knowledge regarding never-married single mothers in Taiwan. Thirdly, the method utilised – the in-depth interview combined with ecomapping – has been shown to deliver rich data. Finally, this research provides a reference for policy makers to re-examine current social policies in terms of their effect on a marginalised and largely ignored group, namely, never-married single mothers. These contributions are elaborated upon below.

9.1.1 Theoretical contributions

This study makes theoretical contributions to at least three areas. Firstly, it involved adopting the framework of individualisation developed by Beck (1992) to understand the social change happening in the Taiwanese context and how one group of Taiwanese people, namely, never-married single mothers, adapted to the change. It also provided insights into and how their life biography or experiences are influenced and altered according to the

change. Its notion regarding disembedding from existing gender, class and religion, or in other words, detraditionalisation (or emancipation and heterogenisation as extended by De Beer (2007)), offered a lens to make sense the status of these never-married single mothers when they decided not to be married mothers but to raise their children on their own.

However, it can be seen that these Taiwanese mothers are not as free to take any choices like their Western counterparts. Becoming a never-married mother is not a personal choice being respected by everyone, rather, the decision has often been considered as a violation to existing social norms in the Taiwanese context. This is, therefore, the reason why the concept of stigma from Goffman (1963) was adopted to examine the social-relational situation of these mothers. That is, whilst there were signs of individualisation emerging when these focal mothers encountered unreasonable treatment, the existing cultural, institutional and structural factors remained too strong, thereby having an impact on the economic and social circumstances of these women when choosing to become a never-married single mother. It therefore can be seen that the concept of individualisation might require some adjustment when investigating different contexts such as marginalised and/or discriminated against groups. Further, Chang and Song (2010) observation that familist values play a key role in people's lives with the Confucian background has also been strongly evidenced in the thesis.

To understand how the individualisation in an East Asian context, such as Taiwan, might be different from that in the Western context, the idea of gendered moral rationalities from Duncan and Edwards (1999) has helped to explain the mechanism of the decision-making process. In this work, this perspective has not been adopted for its original use regarding choosing between being a full-time mother or a full-time worker, for it has been extended to the decision-making process of maintaining in a relationship or not as well as whether or not to keep the child. Through these processes, it can be seen that these never-married mothers have been making their decisions under the influence of their own beliefs, their important others' beliefs (in particular their families) and the values of the whole of society, either economically-oriented or morally-oriented.

Moreover, it can be seen that the structural factors, such as gender and class, can also account for how they managed their lives and consequently three groups of mothers from the sample were identified, who shared similar experiences of becoming a never-married

mothers. This fits with Duncan (2005) claiming that the decision-making process of these mothers should be considered as the outcome of their 'self-conscious social identities', instead of fixing them into total individualisation without considering the existing values, and/or specific structural categories for which they do not have agency. It has been shown that, what these mothers have been experienced is not the fixed idea of individualisation, which Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) have promoted, but a 'moral individualisation' containing both agentic actions and structural constraints, such as having the freedom to choose, but having to face the consequences of violating the social norms.

In sum, the most significant theoretical breakthrough of this research lies in the consideration of a set of Western theoretical frameworks being applied to another context. The chosen focus of Taiwan has uncovered some unique social phenomena that call for the extension of these theories. That is, the patterns to have emerged to incorporate by investigating a Confucian society have shown how the current aforementioned frameworks/theories need to take into account cultural difference.

9.1.2 Empirical contributions

By studying the group of Taiwanese single mothers, my research contributed to filling the knowledge gap in relation to this group of mothers, who have been mostly neglected and stigmatised. The issues concerning never-married single mothers have been investigated elsewhere but never in Taiwan, despite there having been quite extensive research on single mothers or single-parents over the past two decades. As mentioned in Chapter 1, only a few studies have focused on adult never-married single mothers and teenage mothers are generally considered as the being the main representatives of this group. Consequently, this research offered a channel for this group of mother to present their own unheard voices. Moreover, this research has also involved identifying the significant characteristics of this group when compared to the other types of single mothers, whereby it has been elicited that they are much vulnerable in terms of social image, family relationships, as well as finances when struggling to take care of their new-born child and work. This study has indeed offered another way for understanding who such single mothers are and what are their experiences after a challenging life event, in this case becoming a never-married single mother. Moreover, it cannot be neglected that factors, such as gender, social norms and class exerted varying impacts on the focal women. This

meant they were with different levels of severity of challenges and their management strategies were manifold when dealing with the realities of being a never-married single mother. This has demonstrated that there is variety amongst these mothers and hence, they should not be stereotyped nor should their circumstances be over-generalised.

9.1.3 Methodological contributions

As shown in Chapter 4, this research involved adopting a feminist epistemology to investigate a group of marginalised woman, by a female researcher, with the anticipated outcome of being able to improve the situation for the great majority of them. Hence, the central principle of this research is that gender is of essence to the enquiry, with the aim being to expose the unequal situations this group of mothers have experienced. Moreover, the feminist stance of this research has helped to inform the research process that the experiences of focal mothers investigated should not be considered as too identical nor as being completely distinct. More specifically, these mothers had their unique background, biography and life history, but they all chose to become never-married single mothers. It, thus cannot, be denied that elements from both postmodern and standpoint feminist should be taken into account when conducting research on similar groups of women.

The other methodological novelty of this research lies in the usage of ecomapping alongside in-depth interviewing. The combination of methods has been helpful in eliciting the rich data with regards to these mothers' support and social networks. They have provided a set of sequential of stories over time, from which it has been possible to understand how the external factors had an impact on these mothers' decisions and management strategies. Moreover, in practice, it worked as an ice-breaking activity during the interview, such that the researched could feel comfortable when talking to a stranger (Ray & Street, 2005; Rempel et al., 2007). The way the researcher invited the participants to complete the ecomaps also provided an opportunity for them to take charge of what was revealed and hence, what could be covered during the interview. This helps to provide a balance that countered the commonly found unequal position between the researcher and the researched, which many feminist researchers have called for when carrying out fieldwork (Letherby, 2003; Millen, 1997; Stanley & Wise, 1993).

9.1.4 Policy contributions

The outcomes of this study provide useful evidence for policy making in the future. As a group of mothers comprising the smallest group of all single mothers in Taiwan, their reasons to become never-married mothers have been revealed. They were not, as the media has shown, ignorant and immoral, but rather, they were following a certain set of beliefs that guided them when deciding what would be the best for them. Moreover, some of their economic and social situations are indeed worrying and require a structural change in the policy context if many of these women are to improve the quality of their lives. These findings have led to the conclusion that the existing social policies in Taiwan should be changed such that this group of mothers are not taken as being morally deviant and hence, should not be punished owing to their choices.

As discussed in Chapter 8, the policy recommendations cover three key areas that require change: institutions, cultural ideologies and practice. Institutionally, as Taiwan belongs to one of the East Asian welfare regimes, the provision of welfare benefits is always heavily means tested and relying on family. This needs to be addressed so as to take into account the rapidly-changing society, in which more and more single mothers are joining the labour market. Culturally, whilst prevailing ideologies should be treasured, there should be some allowances made. For instance, if women/mothers/daughters were given more agency in their decision making in the Confucian context, this does not need to have a negative impact on the cohesion of a family. In addition, there should be changes made to the Family Part of Civil Code in relation to family surnames and the inheritance of property. At the practical level, the attitudes of those working in fields, such as local welfare services centres, social work or as government staff who directly provide services to these mothers are critical, as these greatly impact on the quality of support given. Currently, there is evidence of stigmatising behaviour from these practitioners, as revealed in this research, hence it is important that any negative views of this marginalised groups should be challenged, such that they become much more effective in ensuring that the available resources are not denied to them by those who are supposed to be helping them.

Based on the evidence from this research, the above-mentioned measures are recommended to help this group of mothers managing their difficulties in terms of economic deprivation and social stigma, and the policy provisions should vary according to their characteristics and needs of these mothers. In an environment in which these mothers are often marginalised and ignored, the research findings have stimulated my

desire to advocate for these mothers and to urge the Taiwanese government to change their approach so as to assist in the empowerment of never-married single mothers.

9.2 Limitations and recommendations of future research

Even though there are several contributions this research has been provided to the existing knowledge and literature in relation to individualisation and single mothers, several limitations of this research and sequentially, the recommendations for future research are addressed here.

First of all, there are several empirical limitations of this research. It was acknowledged in Chapter 4 that the nature of this research targeted at sensitive issues could only be small scale and qualitative to gather rich data in a limited time, which means that outcomes can only be said to represent the 30 mothers in this research and should not be over generalised. It was also made clear that the sources needed to gather the sample of interviewees in the main were gate keepers and this resulted in most of the mothers being working-class and having had the experience of applying for welfare benefits. Whilst the cases of a few middle-class mothers showed that there are signs of individualisation happening among never-married single mothers, it is still important to rethink the data collection process to explore how more mothers from different backgrounds could be included in the sample and not mostly mothers who are rely on benefits. Moreover, building on the current work with same the methodology, it would be beneficial to carry out further research to investigate signs of individualisation amongst divorced single mothers and/or cohabiting mothers in the Taiwanese context and comparing the outcomes with those from this thesis. In response to these limitations, it is contended for future research it would be worthwhile to consider in more depth how class difference, as well as other types of mothers, impacts on the lives of single mothers in the Confucian context. One approach proposed here is to look at this through the lens of ‘intersectionality’, whereby gender, class, age or even other types of single motherhood could be explored in relation to mothers’ decision and lives.

Secondly, during the process of setting up the research background, I often encountered data problems, such as a lack of current and reliable statistical information with regard to the current situation of Taiwanese single parents. It was worse when I endeavoured to understand the proportion of never-married mothers among all types of single mothers, the trend in the illegitimate birth rate and the number of women having abortions. Despite

these statistics relating to some very controversial issues regarding Taiwanese women throughout the decades, such data are not robust enough to refer to and sometimes even absent, which hinders effective research. It is therefore urged that the relevant statistics should be collected and published at the national level so as to draw attention to certain social problems. Multiple sets of methods (i.e. ecomapping or social network analysis) could also be considered.

Whilst being mentioned briefly by some of the mothers as being relevant to their decision-making process regarding having their child and in Pei-fang's case study, regarding her perception of how society will see her in the future, what these mothers believed their future would hold was not targeted in depth during this research. According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998), the issue of futurity sometimes defines people's current aspirations. Whether by being a working/full-time mother could benefit their children, or how they managed their experience of stigma, either by hiding or by self-justifying, the mother's accounts varied, possibly according to how they saw their circumstances in the future. Moreover, their future marital expectation could also be taken as an index to identify their propensity to depend on men, the state or themselves. Thus, it would be beneficial if some of the women of this study were followed up at a later date to see how their narratives continued. That is, it would be interesting to find out whether they gained strength in being single or whether they had decided to have a further relationship.

Finally, this research has been focused on the voices of women/mothers and often the men/the child's fathers were envisaged with images of betrayal, oppression and absence. From the perspective of post-modernism, and other research, which focus on masculinity and fatherhood, it is possible that the voice from 'the other side' might represent another dimension of meaning. Therefore, it would also be interesting to capture men's voices, thereby avoiding over-essentialising the mother's perspective. In so doing, the process of negotiation, the sharing of responsibility and the difficulties faced by men when the fathers are the main carer of a baby out of wedlock could be better understood.

9.3 Looking forward: a brighter future for Taiwanese women/mothers?

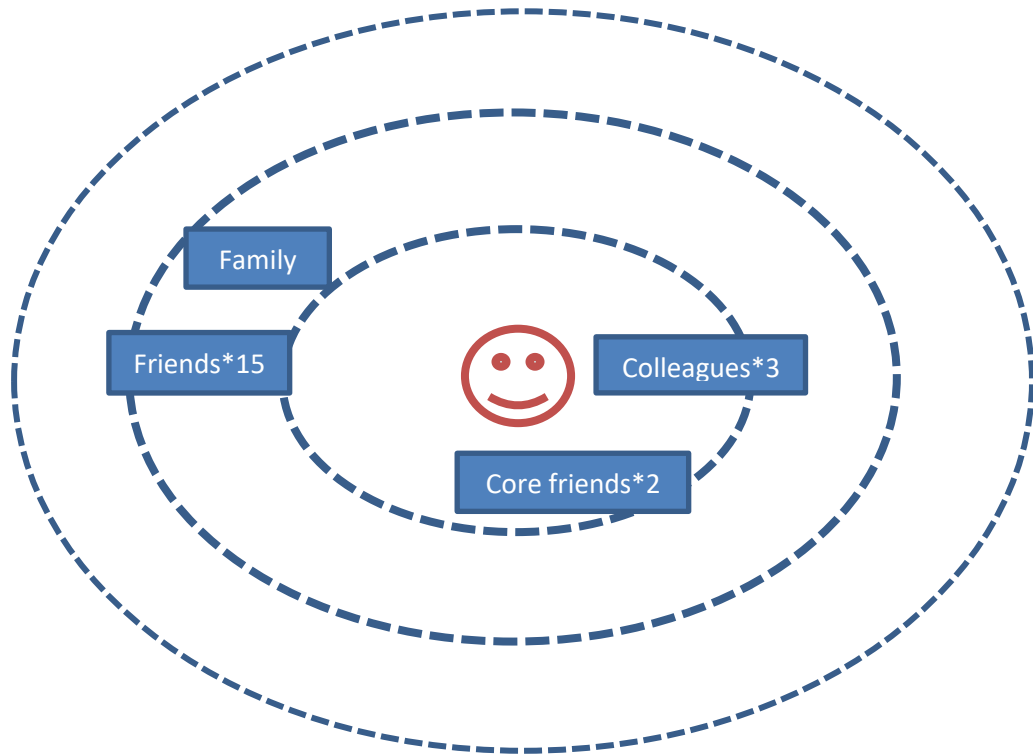
From the outcomes of the research, it can be seen that never-married mothers in Taiwan are currently standing in the shadow of traditional norms and expectations that adhere to Confucianism. They are in a society that fails to offer sufficient opportunities for security

and stability, whilst in many cases placing constraints on them. That is, many of the focal mothers have been subjected to structural limitations, which have led to them being economically-deprived and socially-stigmatised. However, some mothers are gradually finding their pathway to walk away from these perspectives. That is, some of the individualised confronters did find space where they could take a breath and had developed their own explanation of morality. Therefore, this research was not just about a group of mothers who transgressed the social norms. It has highlighted the never-ending story of how women/mothers have to struggle, cope and confront the structure of a patriarchal society, which results in many of them being in a subordinate position, suffering poverty and being stigmatised with very few of them being able to challenge the social norms in a confident manner. It has also been shown how it is essential for the state to consider a total re-examination of current policies regarding family and gender equality, such that the influence of gender, traditional norms and class can be mitigated, so that even the women in the worst situation in terms of finance and social-relational resources can improve their lives.

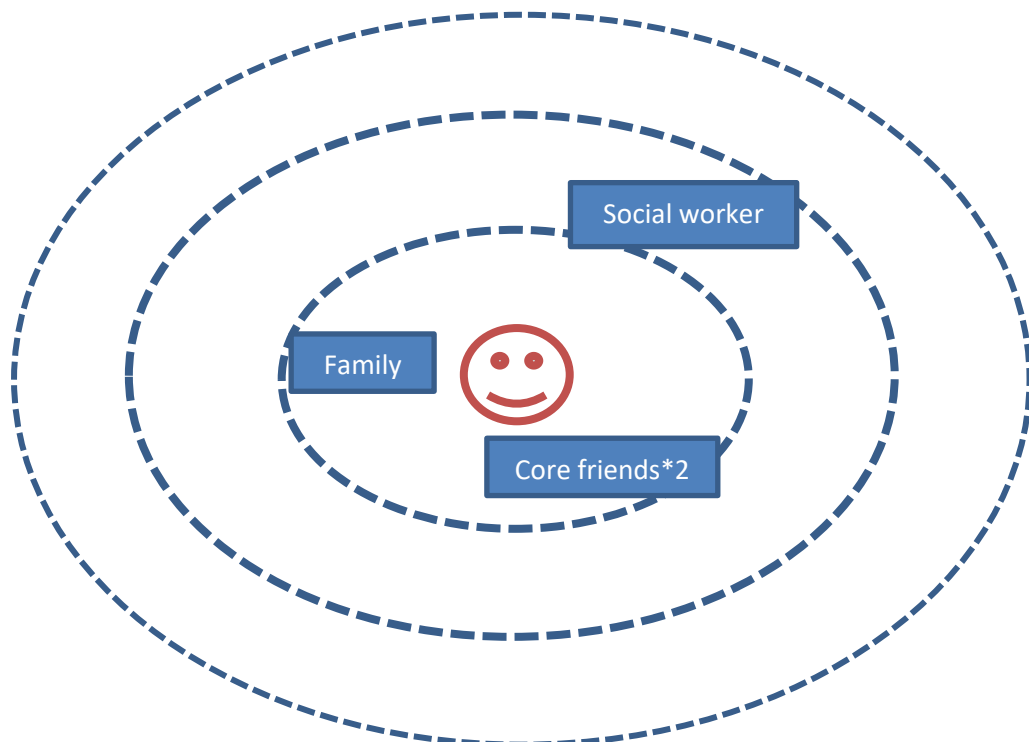
Appendix

Appendix 1

A. Current social network and support (hypothetical examples)



B. Social network and support before becoming a mother (hypothetical examples)



Appendix 2

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

● Background information

Areas of current job

Years of working experience

● Experience when working with never-married single mothers (NMSMs)

What characteristics do you think they own? For example, age or childrearing.

Any special experience when working with them?

In your opinion, do they have any special need due to their NMSMotherhood? (Probe: financial needs, childcare, or housing)

Do you offer any specific service which focuses on these mother's needs or circumstances?

Does it or do they work?

Anything from their situations that makes your work with them difficult?

● Stigma

What does stigma mean to you?

Before you get to know these mothers, what kind of stigma do you think they have experienced before? How about after getting more understanding from them?

Have you imagined if you were at their situation, what would you feel and do?

Would you like to share your own possible stigma on NMSMs?

In your practice, have you done anything which was related to diminish her sense of stigma?

If yes, how?

● Suggestions (or reflections)

To NMSMs' life

To social services and social policies for NMSMs

To social workers and other professionals

● Finally

Is there anything you want to share but I didn't ask you? Anything else you want to share with me?

Appendix 3

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR NEVER-MARRIED SINGLE MOTHERS

● Personal Details

Name

Age

Educational attainment

Employment (Occupation)

Numbers of children

Ages of each child

● Ecomap drawing

1. Please picture those people who are close and important to you right now, and please put them in the first circle.
2. How's your relationship with them? Why?
3. Any others?

(And so on for the second and the third circles)

● Current status

1) Family life

(Probe: The formation of your household. A simple description of the living arrangements and the relationship between family members and their influence on the participants. The information available on the ecomap might overlap).

2) Employment

(Probe: The duration, salaries, working schedule, the satisfaction/expectation of the job and the interaction between colleagues in the workplace).

3) Finance/housing

(Probe: Their financial circumstances, including income from employment, social assistance and the children's father's support. Also, the circumstances regarding housing,

such as what is the rent [if there's any] or living conditions.)

4) Relationships

(Probe: The duration and the expectation of the current relationship status. Describe the age, education and job of your current boyfriend or partner).

5) The child's father

(Probe: do you still see the father of the child? What is the age, level of education and job of your child's father).

● Decision-making Process

I. During pregnancy

1. What things were taken into account when making the decision not to have an abortion? (ex. money, family, work, housing or relationship.)
2. If any, who was the key person influencing you at that time? Why and how?
- So, if we look back at the map you just drew, who gave what support? (Probe: financial help, emotional support, job advice or support in kind (ex. child care))

II. After childbirth

1. What things were taken into account when making the decision not to go for adoption or not getting married? (ex. money, family, work, housing or relationship.)
2. If any, who was the key person influencing you that time? Why and how?
- So, same thing we just did, who gave what support? (Probe: financial help, emotional support, job advice or support in kind (ex. child care))
3. Given all these considerations, what are the main reasons you kept your child?

What else has changed for you? What was affected?

(Probe: relationship, support, financial circumstances, employment situation, etc)

● What do you feel/think about the following?

1. The changes you've been through at the moment? Did anything good or bad happen in relation to the event?

2. The support from your network (including family, friends, neighbours, employers and child's father and his family) after the event? Did it work?
- When referring to the map we just drew, what do you think about the changes?
3. The challenges when you had to deal with the relationship, your employment and financial situation as well as when having to ask for support? How do you manage? Any strategies or future plans?
4. What did this choice (or event) mean to you? Do you feel that you had a degree of freedom during the decision-making process?

● **Other support**

1. What kind of support have you received? For example, do you get any subsidy for your current residence, or any form of benefit from the government when you are away for training or work? (Probe: their use of AFC, GEEL, or assistance from local government.)
2. What was the process when you applied for support from the government or the organization? How did that work for you? (Was it useful for supporting your living situation?)

● **Stigma and coping strategies (Support questions for feelings section Q3, if time to spare)**

1. Have you experienced any difficulties related to people's mistreatment or discrimination towards you because of your marital status?
- Did anyone on the map cause these difficulties?
2. When have you felt or encountered these situations the most?
3. What kind of attitudes towards NMSMs have you experienced in your community and amongst your family? What do you think people think about you and why?
- If it's because you're a single mother, why do you think single parents (or NMSMs) are discriminated against and do you agree with that? Why?
- If it's another reason for discrimination, what is that and do you agree with it? Why?
4. How did the difficulties/problems affect you and your family (or you and your child(ren))?
5. How did you deal with these difficulties and why? (Probe how to avoid feeling

stigmatised, denial (put distance), hiding it or defending it)

6. Has any key person been there to help you?

● Relationship expectation

- *If there's any existing relationship (including child(ren)'s father):*

What is your image about your future family with this man? Will you get married to him?

If no, may I ask why? If yes, why?

- *If there's no relationship since childbirth:*

Why the former one has ended?

Are you looking for a relationship with another man? If no, may I ask why? If yes, why?

- *If there's no current relationship but once has been:*

How long did this relationship (these relationships) last?

May I ask the reason why you chose to leave him (them)?

Are you looking for another relationship in the future? If no, why? If yes, why?

● What would you think you can change?

1. for NMSMs and mothers in general in this society?
2. the way the professionals treats you?
3. the level of government support?
4. anything about your life?

● Finally

Is there anything else that I have not asked you about?

Is there anything else you want to share with me?

Appendix 4

University of Bath

Department of Social & Policy Sciences

Adult never-married single mothers and their experience using welfare in Taiwan

The researcher: Hung-ju Lai

Supervisor: Professor Tess Ridge

Participant Consent Form

The aim of this study is to understand the lives and experiences of unmarried single mothers in a society where most women are likely to be married. According to the leaflet, little is known about the rewards and the challenges you have been through, and unmarried single mothers' voice was not properly listened to. Consequently, your participation could make a contribution to changing this situation.

The interview is to be carried out by myself, under the supervision of Professor Tess Ridge and each will take about 1 hour. With your approval, the interview will be tape-recorded. The interview will start with a general set of questions related to your everyday life, such as age, education and your child(ren)'s age. Mainly, I'm interested in listening to your stories about becoming unmarried single mothers and keen to understand how you manage your life. You can feel free to talk about the experience and feelings in relation to your circumstances. After the interview, the recording of the interview will be transcribed by me.

Participation in this study is voluntary. A small gift will be given in order to thank you for your time. You have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time or not answer any questions which make you uncomfortable. Furthermore, you can withdraw

or change the information you have provided at any time before the thesis is handed in. After the interview, you are welcome to ask about the outcomes from this study.

Privacy and Confidentiality will apply to everything you say during the interview session. Any information that could identify you or the people/locations you mention during the interview will all be anonymised. If you wish, please choose your own pseudonym in order to protect your anonymity or I can choose one for you. Also, only Hung-ju Lai and Tess Ridge will have access to the original information you provide. The transcript of the interview will be encrypted for your protection and deleted after three years.

The results of the research will be obtained using your interview transcript. That is, it will form the basis of this PhD thesis and some anonymous quotes might be cited in future publications based on your contribution.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns after the interview.

Hung-ju Lai (email, phone no.)

Statement of Consent

I've read what is set out above and agree to participate in the research:

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Thanks for your participation!

Appendix 5

Background information and the categories they belong to

Case code	Name (Category)	Regions	Age	Marital Status	Education attainment	Past work history	Current occupational status	Children's age and sex	Welfare receiver	Living arrangements
02C ⁶⁷ 01	Gue-fen (Negotiator)	Chiayi City, South	43	Single	Graduation School	Administrative work in junior high school	Non-employed	5y♂	No	Family
03D01	Ren-fon (Confronter)	Hualien City, East	43	Single	PhD student	Research assistant, book editor	Book translator	4y♀	No	Alone with her child(ren)
04B01	Fang-ling (Survivor)	Taichung City, Central	40	Single	Senior high school	Clothes seller, production line worker	Non-employed	3y♀	Yes	Family
06C02	Yu-mei (Survivor)	Kaohsiung City, South	41	Single	Vocational college	Administrative, accounting, creative design	Joining employment training courses	3y♂	Yes	Alone with her child(ren)
07C03	Ching-hua (Survivor)	Kaohsiung City, South	38	Single	Junior high school	Hairdresser	Non-employed	16y♀; 3y♀	Yes	Family

⁶⁷ A refers to the North part of Taiwan; B refers to the central part of Taiwan; C refers to the South; and D refers to the East.

Case code	Name (Category)	Regions	Age	Marital Status	Education attainment	Past work history	Current occupational status	Children's age and sex	Welfare receiver	Living arrangements
08C04	Hsueh-chu (Negotiator)	Kaohsiung City, South	43	Single	Vocational school	After-school teacher or kindergarten teacher, but once a production line worker	After-school teacher	15y♂; 11y♀	Yes	Alone with her child(ren)
09C05	Chia-chia (Negotiator)	Kaohsiung City, South	24	Single	Five-year vocational college	Restaurant waitress	Production line worker	1y3m♂	No	Alone with her child(ren)
10C06	Ssu-ting (Confronter)	Kaohsiung City, South	30	Single	University	Treasurer in a construction company	Administration and accounting	4y1m♂	Yes	Alone with her child(ren)
11B02	Wei-chen (Confronter)	Taichung City, Central	34	Single	University	An afterschool English teacher	Crammer School English teacher	2m♂	Yes	Family
12B03	Pei-Fang (Negotiator)	Taichung City, Central	39	Single	University	Pharmacist	Treasurer	6m♂	Yes	Alone with her child(ren)

Case code	Name (Category)	Regions	Age	Marital Status	Education attainment	Past work history	Current occupational status	Children's age and sex	Welfare receiver	Living arrangements
13B04	Hiao-bing (Negotiator)	Taichung City, Central	19	Cohabitation	Incomplete senior_high school degree	Selling betel nuts on the streets, tally clerk	Non-employed	1y♂;2m♀	Yes	The child's father
14B05	Ssu-yao (Negotiator)	Taichung City, Central	34	Cohabitation	Vocational school	Various, including cook and sales clerk	Sales Clerk	1y1m♂	Yes	The child's father
15A01	Ya-hsin (Confronter)	New Taipei City, North	38	Single	MBA	Director of a team of in an insurance company	Insurance consultant	1y10m♂	No	Alone with her child(ren)
16B06	Jo-yu (Negotiator)	Taichung City, Central	37	Cohabitation	Senior high school	CNC lathe operator	Non-employed	2m♂	Yes	The child's father
17B07	Shui-lien (Negotiator)	Jhushan Township, Central	41	Single	Vocational school	Bridal boutique photographing	Non-employed	2y♀	Yes	Family

Case code	Name (Category)	Regions	Age	Marital Status	Education attainment	Past work history	Current occupational status	Children's age and sex	Welfare receiver	Living arrangements
18A02	Man-chuan (Negotiator)	Taipei City, North	34	Single	Incomplete vocational school	Part-time actress, jewellery seller, assistant manager in a pet chain store, etc.	Waitress in BBQ restaurant	14y♀	No	Family
19B08	Yi-hsiu (Survivor)	Taichung City, Central	26	Single	Incomplete senior high school degree	Clothes selling, waitress in an Internet Café, production line worker	Waitress in night club	4m♂	Yes	Family
20A03	Yue-shia (Negotiator)	Taipei City, North	37	Single	University	Running a small business in Kaohsiung, clothes vendor	Non-employed	3y♀	Yes	Alone with her child(ren)
21A04	Hui-Chiao (Negotiator)	Taipei City, North	28	Single	Incomplete university degree	Counter sales, working holiday in Australia	Small business on the internet	2m♂	Yes	Family

Case code	Name (Category)	Regions	Age	Marital Status	Education attainment	Past work history	Current occupational status	Children's age and sex	Welfare receiver	Living arrangements
23A05	Hiao-ting (Negotiator)	Taipei City, North	27	Single	Junior high school	Plasterer, waitress in hot pot restaurant and KTV	University cafeteria	7y ♂	Yes	Family
24B09	Ching-ching (Negotiator)	Taichung City, Central	38	Single	Vocational school	Clothes selling	Part-time operator in an electronic company	18y♂; 1y 10m♂	Yes	Alone with her child(ren)
25B10	Hsiu-li (Negotiator)	Taichung City, Central	38	Single	Vocational school	Waitress in restaurant, operator, ticket seller for buses, room maid	Non-employed	4m ♀	Yes	Family
26B11	Hsuan-hsuan (Negotiator)	Taichung City, Central	19	Single	Incomplete vocational school education	Waitress in restaurants, or shrimp fishing restaurant	Non-employed	8m ♀	Yes	Family
27A06	Pei-ti (Negotiator)	Taipei City, North	29	Single	Vocational school	Hair dresser, beautician, manicurist	Shop assistant at School cafeteria	5m ♀	Yes	Family

Case code	Name (Category)	Regions	Age	Marital Status	Education attainment	Past work history	Current occupational status	Children's age and sex	Welfare receiver	Living arrangements
28D02	Yu-chih (Negotiator)	Yilan Su'ao, East	37	Cohabitation	Vocational school	Administration	Tally clerk	7y♂; 4y♀	Yes	The child's father
30C07	Shu-fen (Survivor)	Kaohsiung City, South	42	Single	Vocational school	Hair dresser; Kindergarten teacher	Non-employed	16y♂	Yes	Alone with her child(ren)
31C08	Mei-lan (Survivor)	Kaohsiung City, South	37	Single	Junior high	Pub maid	Unemployed	7y♀; 3y♂	Yes	Family
32B12	Su-lan (Survivor)	Taichung City, Central	46	Single	Senior high	Pub maid	Non-employed	19y♂; 10y♀; 4y♀	Yes	Alone with her child(ren)
33D03	Hiao-li (Survivors)	Yilan Yilan City, East	25	Cohabitation	Incomplete vocational school	Hair dresser	Cleaner	4y♀; 3y♀; 1y♀	Yes	Alone with her child(ren)
34A07	Chih-yun (Negotiator)	Taipei City, North	31	Single	University	Land registration agent	Life insurance sales agent	2y4m♂	No	Alone with her child(ren)

Appendix 6

Index chart for data analysis

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Demographics | 6.4. Housing |
| 1.1. Age | 6.5. Childcare |
| 1.2. Number and age of children | 6.6. Mental and physical health |
| 1.3. Education status | 7. Pathways |
| 1.4. Employment history | 7.1. Difficulties facing |
| 2. Financial situations/housing arrangements | 7.2. Strategies |
| 2.1. Income | 7.3. Feelings |
| 2.2. Welfare benefits | 7.4. Opinions from others |
| 2.3. Help from others | 7.5. Reflections |
| 2.4. Living arrangement | 7.6. Future plans |
| 2.5. Rental payment | 8. Expectation of future relationship |
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| 3.1. Arrangements for each child | 8.2. Reasons |
| 3.2. Reasons | 8.3. Portrait of the other man (if any) |
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| 6. Effects | 11.3. What men will do |
| 6.1. Social life | 11.4. Welfare policy |
| 6.2. Employment | |
| 6.3. Finance | |

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